

EDUARD BENEŠ
A LEADER OF DEMOCRACY

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BOOKS by PHILIP PANETH

KING GEORGE VI AND HIS
HIS PEOPLE

THE P. M. WINSTON S.
CHURCHILL

HAARON VII — NORWAY'S
FIGHTING KING

QUEEN WILHELMINA —
MOTHER OF THE NETHER-
LANDS

CHIANG KAI-SHEK CARRIES
ON

GENERAL DE GAULLE—THE
LIBERATION OF FRANCE

THE GENERALISSIMO CHIANG
KAI-SHEK

CZECHS AGAINST GERMANS
IS POLAND LOST?

SUNSET OVER JAPAN

ALASKAN BACKDOOR TO
JAPAN

RESHAPING GERMANY'S
FUTURE

TURKEY — DECADENCE AND
REBIRTH

GUARDIAN OF THE LAW

THE GLORY THAT IS GREECE

INVINCIBLE YUGOSLAVIA

WHITHER FINLAND?

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BY

PHILIP PANETH



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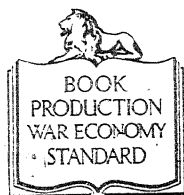
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CHAPTER ONE

A NATION IN REVOLT

REVOLUTION is legitimate as a means of self-defence. Its necessity arises when all other means are exhausted."

This epigrammatic pronouncement of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk found its confirmation when the storm of the first world war fanned the smouldering embers of Czechoslovak nationalism into the flame of revolution. Devoid of civil liberties and military organisation, the revolting Czechs evolved both a stable and democratic government, and an army which gave proof of its valour on many fronts. Military force, as history has proved, is indispensable for the establishment of liberty. Humanity has not yet attained the stage when sweet reasonableness prevails and recognition of truth, as Plato postulates, conduces, of necessity, to corresponding action.

Two great forces still rule the world and have proved themselves efficient allies of oppression: they are stupidity and inertia. These forces found their perfect embodiment in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, whose system of government has been wittily defined as autocracy tempered by sloth. This unwieldy conglomeration of many peoples and tongues had derived its original *raison d'être* from the geographical fact that it was Europe's easternmost bulwark against the Turks. European history, written in a narrow-minded and bigoted spirit for many centuries, has left us with the impression that to the west of Vienna Christian civilisation was safe to nurture the finest bloom of occidental culture, while east of Vienna darkest barbarism covered the Balkans. It is only fairly recently that the objective observer has reached the unavoidable conclusion that Turkish civilisation in the seventeenth century was far superior to the alleged high standards of the West.*

However that may be, with the rolling back of the Turkish flood during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Habsburg monarchy lost its historic significance. Its sole aim became the maintenance of its dynastic interests, and for this purpose it became a willing ally of the Catholic reaction, the Counter-Reformation. In this picture of a world autocratically governed by obsolete monarchs who, while professing allegiance to the Church of Rome, secretly strove to be its masters, the conception of the rights of nationalities had no place. For sound national feeling might have induced the subject peoples to demand, not only autonomy or even independence,

* See my books *Turkey at the Crossroads*, and *Turkey—Decadence and Rebirth*, Alliance Press Ltd., London, 1943.

but also freedom of thought and worship. Therefore an iron policy of repression was practised in regard to the nationalities living on the territory of that vast and sprawling state—an oppression which was characterised by the dead weight of inertia rather than a dynamic conception.

As a Catholic power, Austria also opposed the orthodox form of worship which, carried from Byzantium by the Apostle-Saints Cyril and Method, had spread through the Balkans and up the Danube. It was the creed that conformed with and was expressive of the Slav spirit; yet Austrian hegemony could only be asserted through strengthening the anti-Slav elements. These were, naturally enough, the Germans and, more surprisingly, the Hungarians. The latter, of barbaric and uncertain origin, speaking a language that is not related to one of the three great branches, the Romance, the Germanic and the Slav, have throughout their existence proved a factor of discord and instability, and at the same time faithful watchdogs of their German masters.

Nearly twenty years after the abortive revolution of 1848 Hungary had, through the so-called *Ausgleich* treaty (1867), obtained a preponderant position within the Austrian empire, second only to the Germans. Together, their endeavour was to hold in utter servitude the Slav elements of the monarchy, the Poles, the Czechoslovaks, the Serbs and Croats, Ruthenians and many others.

Devoid of constructive ideas, Austria became more and more an appendix and an instrument of German policy. The Prusso-German empire of Bismarck and the Kaiser realised that Austria-Hungary was the first stage on the way to Germany's paramount aim, the Berlin-Baghdad Axis. The oppression of all Slavs—"Slavs are slaves," was one of Bismarck's dicta—was necessary for the realisation of the pan-German dream.

In Western Europe the prevalent picture of Austria was, and is, silly and superficial. Vienna is so gay, so charming. Dashing young officers in comic opera uniforms, beauteous maidens, the strains of languorous waltzes, Grinzing and the Blue Danube—what a charming, easy-going people! The Danube is not blue, but a muddy brown, as brown as the Nazi uniforms so eagerly donned by the charming Viennese, and so often stained red with the blood of the oppressed by the butchers for the sake of German domination. These gay young officers during the world war committed unspeakable atrocities in Serbia; the charming Viennese persecuted and massacred the Jews, shouting themselves hoarse when Hitler made his triumphant entry into their city.

There is no denying that Old Austria possessed a certain charm. But it was the transitory elegance of decadence and decay, the

formalised survival of an empty shell long after its inner vitality had crumbled into dust. Francis Joseph I, the senile dotard who for sixty-eight long years had embodied reaction and tyrannic impotence, was the perfect expression of the negative concept of government. For a fleeting moment it had seemed that his heir, Francis Ferdinand, might have preserved the tottering empire. He favoured reforms which would have given a measure of autonomy to the Slav populations. But even this modicum of autonomy would not have sufficed to preserve Austria-Hungary; for Francis Ferdinand's mind was not sufficiently enlightened to visualise the indispensable corollary of such autonomy: democracy. He, too, was a believer in autocracy and despotism, a firm believer in the alliance with Germany and Tsarism. The Kaiser was his personal friend, and the object of his admiration. Francis Ferdinand was killed by the bullets of a Serbian youth with the almost symbolic name of Princip. And it was indeed a clash of principles that began.

Those bullets were the first to be fired in the great war which has now raged, sometimes openly, sometimes underground, for thirty years. A whole generation of Europeans has known no true peace for thirty years—a tremendous slice of our lives, if only a brief moment *sub specie aeternitatis*. It was during another Thirty Years' War that the Czechs lost their national freedom: they must regain it after the present war for, as Dr. Beneš said, the security and peace of Europe are indivisible.

When war broke out in 1914, it was already obvious that Austria-Hungary was the Sick Man of Central Europe. The revolt of the Slavs and in particular of the Czechs was the inevitable crisis that must terminate his agony.

The Czechs and Slovaks who had to fight for their hated oppressors were in a position even more tragic than that of the Poles. Poles were found in the German, Austrian, and Russian armies, so that brother was fighting against brother. But the youth of the Czech nation was incorporated in one army only, forced to fight for a cause which was not theirs, for a dynasty that had persecuted them and that they hated. When Czech soldiers joined their units they would sing a song which soon became popular, "We are marching against Russia but do not know why." And while the railway carriages containing German troops were adorned with the inscription "To Paris" or "To Moscow," the Czech soldiers would chalk up on theirs the words "Fresh Meat for Russia." They were forced to fight against their Slav brothers, Russians, Serbs, and their heart was not in the fight.

Already their mobilisation was hampered by silent but stubborn obstruction on the part of the civilian population. Reservists were

parading in the streets, swearing that they would not fight those of kindred blood, that they would turn their arms against their Austrian officers. In Prague, many soldiers openly wore the traditional white-and-red of Bohemia instead of the hated black-and-yellow of Austria.

The Russian armies earned large initial successes, overrunning vast tracts of the Austrian empire. Their Commander-in-Chief, Grand Duke Nicholas, addressed a manifesto to the peoples of Austria-Hungary, promising them the realisation of their national aspirations. Although this promise emanated from a régime no less oppressive and corrupt, though perhaps more vigorous, than that of Francis Joseph, it gave an added incentive to the Czechs. They commenced a systematic sabotage of the call-up and of military discipline, admirably described in Jaroslav Hašek's "Švejk." Desertion and mutiny became frequent, beginning on the Serbian front. A Czech regiment refused to advance and was decimated by Hungarian artillery; another, in November 1914, mutinied and threw Marshal Potiorek's offensive out of gear. The 36th Czech regiment was almost completely annihilated, while others had to be driven forward under the menace of German machine guns. The 11th Infantry Regiment from Písek in Bohemia and the 28th Infantry Regiment from Prague suffered greatly, and consequently mutinied.

All this occurred as early as 1914, and in the following year even greater events took place. Entire regiments with arms, banners and stores, went over to the Russians, often suffering severe losses under the fire of Austrian guns.

These desertions were not completely spontaneous. From the outset, the Russian Army had contained Czech units. These developed intense propaganda activity in those sectors of the Austrian front held by Czech regiments. Naturally the Austrian command did its best to prevent the front and the hinterland learning of the existence of such units, and endeavoured to hush up the many cases of mutiny and desertion. But finally the defection of the 28th (Prague) Regiment of Infantry caused the Austrian High Command to issue an order of the day which wiped out the very name of the regiment, and was followed by terrible reprisals against Czech soldiers of other units.

Henceforth Czech recruits were no longer drafted into regional units but dispersed throughout German, Hungarian or Croat regiments. Open desertion was no longer possible. The only weapon against harsh treatment was passive resistance—and constant readiness to surrender at the first possible moment. During his successful Galician offensive in 1916, General Brussilov took four hundred thousand Austrian prisoners; two hundred and eighty thousand of them were Czechs and Slovaks. The Russian High Command skilfully exploited

the situation of the Czech soldiers, who similarly surrendered to the Italians and the Rumanians when these entered the war.

While the Czech soldiers were thus sabotaging and disorganising the Austrian war effort on three fronts, the population at home resisted in a less spectacular but no less effective manner. They upset administrative routine, boycotted the war loans, spread rumours and demoralising stories, and hid their agricultural produce from requisition. This work of decomposition was organised by the "Maffia," a secret organisation using the name of the "Black Hand" society of Sicilian terrorists. The Maffia spread seditious newspapers secretly imported from Russia, and furnished the Entente with important information on Austrian troop movements, armaments production, etc. Beneš was the leader of this organisation until he was forced to flee abroad in 1915.*

Meanwhile Czechs abroad had commenced a well organised campaign of propaganda. This was directed by Masaryk. Its first important task was to convince the Entente of the necessity for dismembering the Austro-Hungarian empire. "Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie !" was their slogan.** This conception was by no means universally accepted or understood by the Allied Powers. Russia, a last-ditch defender of the monarchic principle, did not wish to destroy another monarchy and, in fact, desired the continued existence of a smaller but by no means impotent Austria as a counterweight to Germany. Even in the case of Germany, Russia—Imperial Russia—did not wish for total destruction.

The Western Powers, on the other hand, knew very little about Austria and her problems. Political consciousness and a knowledge of geography and ethnography has made some slight progress during the past thirty years, but even now such ignorance is by no means limited to the uneducated classes. Thirty years ago there were even diplomats and ministers who were not quite certain about the distinction between Budapest and Bucharest—not to speak of Slovaks, Slovenes, Russians and Ruthenians. In those days, the conception still prevailed that the war was the usual quarrel over territory and boundaries, later to be settled as between opponents who could come to terms. It was only President Wilson's stirring clarion call, proclaiming a new Bill of Rights for the subjugated nationalities, which gave another complexion to the conflict. There is no doubt that Wilson's views were superbly idealistic ; but they also presupposed a living and powerful League of Nations to keep the balance between nationalism and a workable world organisation.

* Particularly daring was the heroic work of another Maffia leader, Šamál.

** The title of Beneš's famous brochure written soon after his arrival in Paris.

Democracy is the fashionable slogan which formed the leitmotiv of propaganda then and now. If Democracy means merely parliamentary institutions, freedom of speech—"Democracy is discussion," said Masaryk—and freedom of assembly, it is not enough. Freedom can be stifled by a parliament just as ruthlessly as by any dictator. The only guarantee for true democracy is that it must be based on the natural and inalienable rights of each individual human being, and not on rigid and artificial conceptions of state, nationality and sovereignty.

Indeed, nationalism, however sincere, is not compatible with true Democracy, except in two types of State: those that are racially completely homogeneous, and those of which the United States of America is perhaps the only instance, where citizenship is not based on racial affinity but on a voluntary act of adhesion.

In all other cases, nationalism must produce its concomitant evils. The foreigner, the "alien," is deemed to have no *a priori* right to live and work on the territory of that State. If he gets such permission, it is a gracious favour, not deriving from his membership of the human species but because the State is willing to make an exception from the general rule that the foreigner is unwelcome. In that case he is treated as a "guest"—paying guest might perhaps be a better description, for he is permitted to pay taxes and assume all other duties of the citizen without a single political right.

A similar fate awaits the racial or linguistic minority. In Europe there is not one foot of soil that has not changed its ruler many times in the course of recorded history. Conversely, most of the territories now under the sovereignty of any State have at some period in the more or less remote past belonged to some other State. Europe is cursed with a long history, and a great deal of ingenuity has been set to work to discover, say, the formation of the skull and the probable dialect spoken by the early stone age dwellers in Eastern Slovakia.*

Consequently every State is bound to have minorities. True, some States were more fortunate in that they achieved national unification centuries before others, and thus exterminated or assimilated their minorities. But Austria-Hungary was the European melting-pot *par excellence*—with the difference that the melting-pot simile implies an eventual coagulation and consolidation which the many races of that empire never achieved. The inextricable jumble of nationalities thus produced persists to this day. The Austrian armies were led by generals bearing Czech, Italian or Hungarian names. Prominent Polish and Czech nationalists were "Germans"—to judge from

* Among the few exceptions to this rule, incidentally, happens to be the so-called Sudetenland which since the dawn of history has been an integral part of the Czech Kingdom of Bohemia.

their names. Russian generals had names like Rennenkampf, Russia's Prime Minister was Stürmer ; Mittelhauser and François were French and German generals respectively. The Nazi *Gauleiter* who is to Germanise Austria, is Globocznik. These instances could be continued *ad infinitum*.

Or take the not uncommon case of a Czech official, who was stationed in a Hungarian-speaking part of the Monarchy and sent his children to a German school. How is nationality to be determined ? Is language the criterion ? It is obvious that this must fail, since language has by no means always been an index of nationality. The Jewish nation, for instance, uses almost every language ; yet were this test applied, only the half-million Hebrew-speaking Jews in Palestine could claim to belong to the Jewish nation. Is it the mystical conceit of race ? It is now generally held that there are no pure races left, and " race " would appear to be a metaphysical conception rather than one subject to the exact tests of science. Neither the formation of the skull nor the length and curvature of the nose, the colour of the skin or the texture of the hair, are a reliable guide. And again, language serves least of all. The Romance elements in the English language, for instance, were brought there by the Normans of Brittany, a purely Teutonic tribe.

Yet the conception of humanity, from which alone civic rights ought to derive, seems farther away than ever. As a result Europe has again become Balkanised. The smallest group will proclaim its idiom or provincial dialect as a sovereign language, and claim independence for those that speak it. Since language or dialect in Europe may change from one village to the next, we are presented with a problem incapable of solution on purely linguistic, let alone racial, lines.

Meanwhile minorities are victims or nuisances, according to the point of view. At any rate they are an element of instability and of danger to any lasting peace. Those minorities which, like the German groups, are backed by a powerful mother country, became, as they were bound to, tools of expansion and aggression. Where the parent country was less strong, as in the case of Hungarian minorities, revindications became equally vociferous, while at the same time the parent state allied itself with all the factors making for aggression, war and the consequent troubling of waters with their promise of rich and easy catches. In the third case, where a minority is not backed by an organised state at all, as is the case with the Jews, such minority usually provoked, by its very helplessness, the worst instincts of the dominant groups who found in it a scapegoat that could be attacked without risk. Let it be said in honour of the Czechoslovak

régime until 1938 that its treatment of the Jewish minority stands out by its fairness.

If the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had found the way to unite its nationalities into a harmonious whole, perhaps through Federation, all these problems could have found a solution. The instance of America again springs to mind, where the unifying impetus of Americanism has superseded all such impediments. But then, the happy peoples, as the philosopher said, have no history . . .

In the absence of any constructive solution on the part of the Monarchy Masaryk and Beneš worked for the destruction of Austria-Hungary. Masaryk, until he decided to go abroad, had indeed tried his utmost to convince the Viennese Government that an understanding with the Slav nations of the empire was of vital importance. This was evidenced in the famous Friedjung trial; it was also shown in Masaryk's protracted efforts to effect a meeting between Pašić, the Serb leader, and Count Berchtold, the Austrian Foreign Minister. Pašić was prepared to come to Vienna, but Count Berchtold refused categorically, with characteristic irresponsibility. Thus Masaryk and Beneš had to recognise that the time for compromise was past.

At that time, while the outcome of the war was still in doubt, their opinion was not at first shared by all Czech patriots. The population was, of course, in favour of complete independence—as was Masaryk from the moment he left Austria-Hungary. But the Czech press and the Czech political parties could not as yet openly express their views. The several Czech parties represented in the Imperial Parliament in Vienna, the *Reichsrat*, totalled one hundred and eight deputies. They formed a National Council as early as November 19, 1914. But two Czech parties, one of them headed by Masaryk, remained outside the Parliamentary Club and the National Council. The reason was that the National Council, headed by Mattuš, was content to demand autonomy within the framework of a federated monarchy, while Masaryk, Beneš and their followers refused all compromise with the Habsburgs and demanded a sovereign and independent Czech State. It is interesting to note that at that time the constitutional form of that State was by no means clearly visualised. Masaryk himself played with the idea of a constitutional monarchy, with the Duke of Connaught or a Danish Prince on the throne. Soon, however, it became evident under the impact of the Russian revolution which shook the thrones of Europe, that the new State would be a republic.

The attitude of those willing to compromise with the Habsburgs must be understood in the light of the conditions then prevailing. The outcome of the war was still very much in doubt, and even in the event of an Allied victory policy with regard to the Austro-Hungarian empire was by no means clearly laid down. In addition, a temporising

attitude would, the moderates hoped, spare the Czech people the horrors of increased persecution. This persecution, however, was demanded by Berlin and put into practice by Vienna in a savage effort to overcome passive resistance and sabotage. Most of the Czech papers were suppressed, while the others were obliged to publish official propaganda. Czech leaders were arrested. Klobáček, the leader of the Czech National Socialists, had been detained at the outbreak of the war; in May, 1915, there followed the arrest and the subsequent trial and condemnation to death for high treason, of Dr. Kramář, leader of the Young Czech Party, Dr. Scheiner, leader of the Sokol Movement, and many other prominent Czechs. A few months later, the Sokol was banned. Professor Masaryk, who had among his personal friends many British politicians and journalists—among them Mr. Wickham Steed—had maintained contact with them. He went abroad, and when it was learned during his stay in Italy that he was to be arrested on his return, Beneš himself met him in Switzerland and warned him not to come back.

Dr. Beneš's journey turned out to be of great importance. Now the centre of revolutionary activity was established abroad (Beneš's post in the Maffia was taken over by Šámal), while the measures of the Austrian authorities went far to paralyse these activities at home. Those Czech deputies who were not arrested pursued a policy of seeming loyalty to Austria, limiting their obstruction to parliamentary opposition, voting against war credits, etc. But the Austrian Government never succeeded in obtaining from them what they desired: an open repudiation, in the name of the Czech people, of Masaryk's and Beneš's activities.

Austrian policy and censorship exercised an iron régime of oppression in Bohemia. The properties of Masaryk, Beneš and other fugitives were seized, harsh punishments meted out for the slightest infraction of arbitrary laws, and several people were sentenced to death for spreading the Russian manifesto.

Czech opposition had to go underground. The peasants continued to sabotage food requisitions, a whispering campaign of rumours detrimental to the Austrian war effort went on, mysterious explosions occurred in the Škoda works—but open revolt on a national scale was out of the question. It would have been a hopeless undertaking, and many expected the Russian troops soon to march into Bohemia and liberate them without the necessity for open revolt. Yet there were rebellions and executions.

In 1916 Emperor Francis Joseph, "Old Procházka," as the populace used to call him, joined his ancestors in the crypt of the Capuchins in Vienna, and was succeeded by the last Habsburg on the throne, Charles X. Charles, dimly conscious of the imminent

disruption of his ramshackle empire, tried the disproved remedy of all weak rulers : belated reforms. An amnesty freed twenty thousand political prisoners and reprieved others, among them Kramář. Count Clam-Martinic, who owned large estates in Bohemia, was the instrument chosen by the Emperor to pacify and reconcile the Czechs. But these offers were refused, and the first Russian revolution of March, 1917, which established a democratic régime in Russia, gave a new impetus to the centrifugal elements within the monarchy. This was shown in May when the *Reichsrat* met and for the first time the German element found itself in a minority as against Czechs, Serbo-Croats, Slovenes, Italian and Rumanian representatives. South Slavs and Ukrainians vigorously demanded autonomy ; Czech writers published a revolutionary manifesto demanding independence, and the Czech parliamentary representatives openly postulated the transformation of Austria into " a federation composed of free and equal States." Large crowds filled the streets of Prague, and twenty thousand workers went on strike. In October, 1917, the dissolution of the empire had made such progress that the Czech deputy, Staněk, could openly proclaim in Parliament that the Czech nation felt ardent sympathy for France. " The Czech nation declares," Staněk said, " that this German-Hungarian structure based on injustice and violence will crumble into ruin."

This declaration could not have been made without the successful work abroad by Masaryk, Beneš, and their followers. This work had not been easy. If the Czechs abroad, in France, Russia and England, could speak freely, it was because their claims coincided with official policy, and the formation of Czech units brought a considerable military accretion to the Allies. America, however, where the largest Czechoslovak colony happened to be, was still neutral, and this neutrality imposed certain restrictions. Next to America, the largest Czech colony was to be found in Russia, and the numbers of Czech volunteers swelled with each new batch of deserters and prisoners. It was Masaryk who united the sometimes divergent policies of Czech groups abroad and procured the necessary finance. A central organisation was created, the National Council of Czech Lands, whose members were Dr. Beneš, Dürich and Štefánik. The Council carried on its propaganda by means of several periodicals appearing in Paris and America, and from the first endeavoured to establish direct contact with the Allied governments. Already in 1915 Masaryk submitted a memorandum on the Czech question to the British and the other Allied governments and in America, Switzerland and France openly preached his credo " Destroy Austro-Hungary ! "

The Tsarist government had favoured the formation of Czech units, but visualised Czechoslovakia as a Russian dependency, preferably governed by a Russophil monarch. Masaryk and Beneš had many difficulties to overcome—in Russia a reactionary state of mind, in the West an almost complete ignorance of the Czech question.

In a desperate attempt to save his throne and preserve the unity of his empire, Charles, early in 1918, was willing to renounce his alliance with Germany and to offer far-reaching concessions to the nationalities which were in almost open revolt. In January, 1918, another general strike spread through Bohemia which the Austrian Prime Minister, Seidler, vainly tried to counter by dividing the province into German and Czech districts. Here is the first attempt at partitioning Bohemia in the interests of German domination.

At the same time a Czech Constituent Assembly, composed of Members of Parliament and the three provincial diets, assembled at Prague and openly proclaimed national self-determination. An independent Czechoslovak State—there was no longer mention of Austria and her dynasty—was to comprise the historic lands of the Crown of Bohemia, and the Slovak parts of Hungary. The declaration was issued on January 6, the Festival of the Three Kings, a day memorable in Czech history ever since. The Austrian government not unnaturally considered this declaration overt separatism, and Count Ottokar Czernin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, retaliated with a violent anti-Slav speech. This provoked a great counter-manifestation of all Slav nationalities, including the Poles. Not only Czech and Serbo-Croat deputies but everybody who had name and renown as writer, artist, scientist, took part in the historic meeting which culminated in the following solemn oath :

“Let us swear with united souls that we shall now and for ever remain faithful to our task, faithful to our struggle, faithful unto the grave. Let us persevere until we win and gain the independence of our nation.

“Czech People ! Remain firm and resolute until your hour comes. Grow and flourish free in your land, in the great family of the nations of the world for your own happiness and for the good of mankind about to be liberated.”

We have spoken of Czech political action. The Slovaks had all along been in a less favourable position than the Czechs. Under Hungarian domination they had enjoyed even less liberty than the Czechs and were consequently less able to achieve political organisation. The population consisted to a large extent of peasants, ignorant and priest-ridden, thus exposed to the vicious circle to be observed in so many Catholic countries where ignorance breeds clericalism, and the priests cultivate ignorance. Priests formed a large part of

the intellectuals in Slovakia, and the names Hlinka and Tiso remain before history as sinister illustrations of political Catholicism at its worst.

This is not to say that the Slovaks did not possess capable and patriotic leaders. Men like Štefánik and Hodža represented the overwhelming majority of the inarticulate Slovak peasantry when they joined Masaryk and Beneš, subscribed to amalgamation with the Czechs at the historic Pittsburgh Congress and thus anticipated the formal ratification of Czecho-Slovak unity confirmed by the National Assembly of the Slovak nation at Turčian-St. Martin on October 30, 1918.

Both these Declarations are of vital historic importance, for they formed the Charter of the new Czechoslovak State. In subsequent years these documents were attacked more than once—chiefly by Slovak autonomists, Slovak pro-Magyars, and all those forces hostile to Czechoslovakia. In evaluating the documents we must bear in mind that prevalent conditions made it impossible to consult the people directly, either by way of a plebiscite or through the election of deputies. The Czech leaders were proscribed fugitives, the Slovak deputies were deliberating in back rooms while the streets were being patrolled by Hungarian troops. But the Agreements of Pittsburgh and Turčian-St. Martin were ratified by overwhelming majorities. Hlinka's autonomists never exceeded twenty per cent. of the Slovaks, while the other eighty per cent. favoured co-operation.

The Pittsburgh Convention was attended by representatives of the Czechs and Slovaks in the U.S.A. They agreed on the union of Czechs and Slovaks in an independent State, granting to Slovakia a separate administration, and the recognition of the Slovak language in public affairs. The Czechoslovak State was to be a democratic republic, details of the Constitution to be determined by duly elected representatives following the liberation of the country. The document was signed by Masaryk who thus united Czechs and Slovaks in the U.S.A. with the aims of his National Council in Paris.

Even Father Hlinka expressed agreement with Czecho-Slovak unity. He said (on May 29th, 1918):

“The Habsburgs were the traditional enemies of our people and of all Slavs. We shall never attain our aim by devious methods; we must act now and say clearly whether we wish to continue with the Hungarians or with the Czechs. Let us not avoid the question: let us say openly that we are in favour of the Czechoslovak orientation. Our thousand years' marriage to Hungary has failed and we must separate.”

At the same time the Slovak National Party issued the following Manifesto:

“The Slovak National Party recognises the unconditional and unrestricted right of self-determination of the Slovak people, and on this basis demands the Slovak people's participation in the creation of an independent State consisting of Slovakia, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.”

This Declaration, issued in May, 1918, formed the basis of the later Declaration of Turčian-St. Martin. Its final text is of great importance, since it clearly expresses both uncompromising opposition to Hungary, and the desire for unqualified union with the Czechs. Its salient passages are therefore reproduced here :

“The representatives of all Slovak political parties, assembled in Turčian-St. Martin on October 30, 1918, and incorporated as the National Council of the Slovak branch of the united Czechoslovak nation, base themselves on the principle of national self-determination as recognised by the whole world. The National Council declares that it is the only body entitled to speak and act on behalf of that part of the Czechoslovak nation which dwells within the Hungarian frontiers. The Hungarian government does not possess such authority, since for many years it has known no greater task than to oppress everything Slovak ; it did not found, or allow our people to possess, a single school, did not admit Slovaks to public administration and services, and ruined and uprooted our people through its policy of medieval feudalism . . .

“The National Council of the Czechoslovak people dwelling in Hungary declares :

“1. Both linguistically and culturally the Slovak people is an integral part of the Czechoslovak nation. In all cultural struggles conducted by the Czech nation, which made it world-famous, the Slovak branch has had its part.

“2. For this Czechoslovak nation we demand unrestricted self-determination on the basis of complete independence . . .”

In later years it was alleged by autonomists and separatists that this Declaration contained a secret clause, limiting Czechoslovak co-operation to a period of ten years, after which Slovakia was to have complete independence. This allegation was exploded as a complete lie in two trials, one in 1926, and the other, against the separatist, Professor Tuka, in 1929. The courts gave the defence every facility for proving the existence of that clause, but not an atom of proof was supplied.

At the time of the Turčian Declaration it was enthusiastically received, not only by the Czechs, but also by all responsible Slovaks. The Slovak author Fedor Houdek (*Osvobodenie Slovenská in Slovensky Rozchod s Madármí*, 1928) writes :

“Not a single protest was raised among the Slovaks either against the Declaration or against the Czechoslovak State . . . The Hungarians are wont to assert that the union of Slovakia with the Bohemian Lands was effected without and against the will of the Slovaks. Yet Slovaks and Czechs had been working together for the disruption of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in which they were oppressed by Germans and Hungarians, politically, culturally and economically. And this common activity brought victory to the Czechoslovak cause . . . There is no patriotic Slovak who does not love the Czechoslovak Republic.”

The Pittsburgh Declaration, on the other hand, was criticised because the Slovak organisations adhering to it had not yet, on the relevant date, been incorporated as a body with legal personality under American law. This is, of course, a purely formal point, unworthy of serious consideration. Surely this legal technicality could not have lent greater weight to the opinions expressed, nor, conversely, can its absence affect their value.

CHAPTER TWO

FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

WHILE these events were demonstrating to the whole world that the long expected collapse of Austria-Hungary had become a reality, the Czechoslovak nation was contributing considerable military aid to the Allied war effort. The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia had attained a strength of some eighty thousand well-equipped troops. After the first revolution which established the Kerensky régime it was intended to transfer the Czech Legion to France, there to be combined with existing Czech units in the French army. A Czechoslovak army with its own command was to be formed, thus visibly expressing Allied recognition of Czechoslovakia as an "Associated State."

But the rapid course of events in Russia vitiated the attempt. The Bolsheviks assumed power and owing to the total exhaustion of the country had to discontinue resistance against the Germans who, in the summer of 1918, issued their Brest-Litovsk "Diktat"—an instructive specimen of the kind of peace imposed on the vanquished by a victorious Germany.

The Czechoslovak Legion began a long and arduous march to Vladivostok—an epic *anabasis* comparable to that of Xenophon's valiant Ten Thousand.

Together with Ukrainian Communists, the Czech Legion had stubbornly resisted the German advance into the Ukraine. At that time, with the Russian armies in full dissolution, the Czechoslovaks represented the only organised military force capable of prolonged resistance. But when the Ukraine obviously began to side with Germany and Austria (under the bloodstained régime of the butcher Petliura) Masaryk ordered the evacuation of the Czechs via Vladivostok—a distance of 6,000 miles. Agreement was reached with the Soviet authorities in Moscow, and the long march began.

Soon, however, the local Soviets, under German influence, began to oppose the march of the Czech troops. Two delegates of the Czech National Council were imprisoned as hostages by the Bolsheviks and forced to sign a treaty which would have disarmed and interned the Czech Legion.

Under these circumstances the only choice was forcing a passage. Russia at that time was in complete anarchy. Armed bands roamed the countryside, styling themselves "White" or "Red," but pillaging and murdering the population with complete absence of political bias. Such bands changed their allegiance more than once, and the writ

of Moscow, then fighting for its very life against the Tsarist generals, did not run in Siberia, which the Czechs had meanwhile reached. An incident at Chelyabinsk, where the local Soviet arrested several Legionaries and tried to disarm others, was the first of many conflicts. As a defensive measure, the Czechs were forced to occupy towns and railway lines, since a large contingent of their forces was still standing on the Volga and might have been cut off by the enemy.

The Czech troops were led by brilliant commanders. They inflicted several defeats on the Reds both on the Volga front, where they occupied Samara (now Kuibyshev) and in the Irkutsk region. By July, 1918, the Czechs were the most numerous and best organised contingent in the Far East, where a combined Allied force, supported by White Russians and Italians, was stationed in order to guard the Trans-Siberian railway. These forces, supplemented by small American and French contingents, formed the "Entente Bridgehead in the Ural." The Czech Legion was indispensable here and for this reason was not evacuated to France as originally intended.

For several months during summer and autumn of 1918 the Czechs opposed the Red Army, until they were obliged under increasing pressure to fall back from the Volga towards the Trans-Siberian railway. Here they were exposed equally to attack by local Communists, and the barely concealed hostility of the Russian monarchists under Admiral Kolchak, who had himself proclaimed dictator. The Czech troops, imbued with a democratic spirit, became at once suspect to Kolchak who relegated them to guard duties on the vital artery of the Trans-Siberian railway.

Kolchak's incapable and arbitrary régime alienated the sympathies of the Allied troops as well as of the population among which Communist agitators caused many risings. At the same time Kolchak's treatment of the Czechs deteriorated, until he demanded their disarming and internment.

In view of this situation the Allied High Command dropped Kolchak, and the Czech troops were formally ordered by Masaryk to retire towards Vladivostok. His own troops rose against Kolchak, and a Social-Revolutionary government was formed in Siberia. The Czechs seized Kolchak and handed him over to this government which subsequently, dominated by extremists, executed the Admiral.

Siberia, too, was now engulfed by the revolution, and further opposition would have been unavailing. Early in 1920 the various Allied contingents left Vladivostok; after six years of incessant warfare, of battling against superhuman difficulties, having crossed an entire continent, the Czech Legionaries finally returned home.

While the Czech Legionaries were fighting in Russia, the events of November, 1918, had terminated hostilities in Europe. Or so it

seemed : for fighting went on in many places of that unhappy continent. The Communist revolution united the most diverse elements in active resistance. In the Baltic regions German troops were fighting side by side with their enemies of a few weeks ago ; in Hungary an unstable democratic régime, under Count Károlyi, was soon to be engulfed by the emissaries of Moscow, under the Communist leader, Béla Kun.

Hungary constituted the greatest danger to the independence of Czechoslovakia. This independence, it is true, was recognised and guaranteed by the victors. But since the situation was extremely fluid, and possession constituted nine points of the law, Hungary counted on creating a *fait accompli*. It was thought unlikely that the war-weary democracies would resume fighting for the sake of frontier demarkations in Slovakia and Ruthenia. The Czechoslovak army was still in France, Italy and Russia : on the home front the Prague Government disposed only of a few thousand badly armed volunteers, next to no artillery, and very little by way of supplies. In addition, the German element showed itself unreliable even then. An attempt to establish a " German-Bohemian Free State " with Reichenberg as its capital, was suppressed, but constant vigilance was necessary.

In order to placate the victors and blind them to the real issues, Hungary adopted a quasi-democratic régime. It promised autonomy—within Hungary—to the Slovaks, and made similar promises to the Carpatho-Ruthenians who were to be organised into a " Ruská Krajna," a semi-autonomous district.

There is hardly need to draw attention to the intensely chauvinistic attitude of Hungary past and present. It is a trait so deeply engrained in the Hungarian that it was Béla Kun's régime which, despite its fine phrases of international solidarity, launched a vicious attack on the Slovak parts of the Czechoslovak State.

This attack had considerable initial success, and the Czechs were hard pressed. It seemed that Hungary was about to become the spearhead of Communist aggression. It needed very strong pressure by Clémenceau, the political " Commander-in-Chief " of the Allies, to force the Hungarians to evacuate the invaded parts of Slovakia and Ruthenia.

After 123 days, Béla Kun's régime collapsed under the onslaught of the Rumanians, who finally occupied Budapest. Béla Kun's Red terror was followed by the abominable White terror of Horthy, the aristocratic mass murderer, who until 1944 directed the affairs of that semi-barbarous country.

On June 4, 1920, the Treaty of Trianon finally forced Hungary to disgorge a considerable quantity of the territorial loot accumulated during several centuries as a reward for Hungary's support of Germany.

Since that day Hungary has remained the sore spot of the Danube basin. The formation of the Little Entente, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia, had among its aims that of opposing Hungarian revisionism. Consequently, Hungary had to seek supporters among fascist and semi-fascist powers and cliques, and conducted a successful campaign of propaganda abroad, and of terrorism nearer home. Slovak and Croat gangsters were trained on Hungarian territory. The assassination, in 1934, of King Alexander of Yugoslavia was instigated by Hungary.

At the same time Hungarian propaganda concentrated on England where it found a powerful supporter in the late Lord Rothermere. An admirer of Hitler and Mussolini, an implacable enemy of Czechoslovakia, the noble Lord put his press at the disposal of this vicious propaganda. The average newspaper reader has a brief memory—which is the reason why the antics of certain newspapers were all too soon forgotten. At a time when Czechoslovakia was the one island of Democracy east of the Rhine and therefore the natural ally of Britain, the *Daily Mail* was conducting a campaign of vilification which is unpardonable even under the worst psychosis of appeasement.

Writing in the *Daily Mail* on February 12, 1937, Lord Rothermere has this to say on the origin of Czechoslovakia :

"The Peace Conference was bluffed into making Czechoslovakia. This Central European sham, which is a perpetual danger to the peace of that part of the Continent, was contrived in the interests of the Czechs, a crafty race, who managed to keep a foot in both camps throughout the war and at its end claimed an extravagant reward from the victors or their duplicity."

Speaking of the minorities in Czechoslovakia, Lord Rothermere seems to anticipate and welcome Hitler's aggression, when he continues his above-mentioned article as follows :

"As captives of a race notorious for petty meanness they have been subjected to cold-blooded expropriation and oppression . . . The Pharaoh who hardened his heart was engulfed by the Red Sea. The prisoners of Czechoslovakia may see their captors overtaken by the fate of that old Egyptian tyrant who would not let the people go."

Thus were the very words of Hitler anticipated, and his aggression on a civilised and friendly nation encouraged, by part of the press of a great Democracy. Was this still "appeasement"—or was it incitement ? Let history judge . . .

CHAPTER THREE

A LIVING DEMOCRACY

WHEN the great Masaryk entered Prague on December 21, 1918, among the joyous pealing of the bells, the thundering salvos of the guns and the jubilant acclamations of the population, he realised that but the first part of his task was completed. Life is not like the films in which the final embrace of the reunited lovers constitutes the happy ending ; the real problems for them only begin at that stage. These problems are less spectacular but very important.

A nation, likewise, cannot live in an atmosphere of perpetual elation. What it can and must do is to draw strength from the remembrance of the great dates of its history and apply itself to the daily round with the same fortitude and heroism that it showed on the battlefield.

The Czechoslovak Republic itself was but the rebirth of ancient, lost independence ; but to many people "Czechoslovakia" was a completely new name on the map of Europe. The State had arisen from the collapse of an empire ; it had been the fruit of a long war which from an imperialistic conflict had become a struggle for the democratic principle. Czechoslovakia therefore had the moral obligation of attempting to approach perfection as a modern democratic and social State. This obligation was at the same time a legal one. The Czechoslovak delegation to the Peace Conference had submitted a Protocol—the so-called Note of May 20, 1919—in which the new State spontaneously undertook certain specific obligations, particularly in respect of the minorities.

This unilateral offer was subsequently as it were superseded by and codified in the provisions of the League of Nations Statute, which provided a permanent Minorities Commission to which the member States were accountable, and the minorities had the right to appeal.

It is interesting to compare the Czechoslovak offer of 1919, which went even beyond the minimum requirements stipulated by the League of Nations, with the degree of fulfilment attained during the twenty years of the Republic's existence. We shall find that all the promises contained in the Note were carried out as far as conditions and the attitude of the minorities, particularly the German minority, permitted.

The actual text of the protocol ran as follows :

"Paris, 20th May, 1919.

"1. The Czechoslovak Government intends to organise its State by taking as the bases of the rights of the nationalities the principles applied in the constitution of the Swiss Republic, that is to say, the

Government designs to make of the Czechoslovak Republic a sort of Switzerland, while paying regard of course to the special conditions in Bohemia.

"2. Universal franchise coupled with the system of proportional representation will be introduced—which will ensure to the various nationalities in the Republic a proportional representation in all elected organs (institutions).

"3. The schools throughout the whole territory of the State will in general be maintained out of public funds, and they will be established for the individual nationalities in the parishes as soon as the necessity arises, on the basis of the number of children in the parish as fixed by law, to inaugurate a school.

"4. All public professions (functions) will be accessible to the individual nationalities living in the Republic.

"5. The courts of justice will be mixed courts in respect of the language employed, and the Germans will be able to bring their cases before the highest courts in their own language.

"6. The local administration (local affairs of the parishes and districts) will be carried on in the language of the majority of the population.

"7. The question of a person's religion will not be posed in the Czechoslovak Republic—there will be no difficulties in this connection.

"8. The official language will be the Czech language, and the State for external purposes will be a Czechoslovak State. In practice, however, the German language will be the second language of the country, and will be employed on a basis of equality in the current administration, before the courts, and in the central Parliament. It is the intention of the Czechoslovak Government in practice and daily usage to satisfy the population in this connection, but at the same time, of course, a special position will be reserved for the Czechoslovak language and the Czechoslovak element.

"9. Expressed in another way we can say that the present position (the Germans had a huge preponderance) in its broad outline will remain unchanged; only the privileges which the Germans previously enjoyed will be reduced to their due proportions (for example, the number of German schools will be reduced where these schools shall be found superfluous).

"In general it will be a very liberal régime approaching considerably to the Swiss régime."

The promise to make of Czechoslovakia "a sort of Switzerland" has been wilfully misinterpreted by the Germans. Switzerland has a population of four million, thus being one of the smaller States of Europe; Czechoslovakia, with a population of over fifteen million (1936) was a medium-sized State with a definite political task to

fulfil in Central Europe. The German-speaking population of Switzerland was and is completely averse to any *Anschluss* ideas: all its loyalty and energies are devoted to Swiss interests. The majority of the Germans in Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, did not conceal their hostility to the new State, nor were they found willing to co-operate for the common weal. For eight years, till 1926, they refused to participate in the government, preferring the easier role of obstructive and destructive criticism. In 1926 German ministers finally joined the Government in pursuance of the so-called "activist" policy. But the rise of Nazism in Germany stimulated the intransigence of the Germans in Czechoslovakia. German demands since that time must not be viewed on their merits alone; they were not aimed at improvements but exploited real or imaginary grievances for the political purposes of the Third Reich that was gathering strength behind the ramshackle façade of the Weimar Republic.

In this connection a word should be said to Anglo-American observers who, from an innate sense of fairness, are often too prone to judge German claims on their factual merits alone, without stopping to examine the underlying motives. A case in point: the demand for proportional representation of Germans in the judicature sounds fair enough. But is it fair to any State to demand from it the appointment of judges who have openly declared their allegiance to a foreign power and to a "legal" system which declares that "whatever benefits Germany is right, whatever is harmful to her is wrong"? Or take cultural autonomy. It sounds innocent enough; but in the case of the German minority it did not mean the right to read books, but to burn them; not to express their thoughts, but to suppress freedom of democratic speech; not to increase freedom and tolerance, but to persecute and ostracise Liberals and others. And when the most far-reaching demands were granted, the Germans would use them as stepping-stones to others—so manifestly provocative, so incompatible with the dignity and integrity of a sovereign and democratic State that the real intention should have been obvious to the meanest intelligence.

Another comparison with Switzerland is misleading. Switzerland is the only country in the world able to achieve *direct* democracy. Because of the small size of the country and the small numbers of the population, it is possible to go directly to the people and consult them—even on questions of secondary importance—by way of a referendum. The political constituencies are so small that it is even possible to assemble and consult all voters of one district in one mass meeting—a quaint survival of the Germanic *Thing* which is, of course, completely impracticable in larger political units. To demand, therefore, that Czechoslovakia should slavishly copy Swiss institutions

is as contrary to the nature of the promise—which refers to “special conditions in Bohemia”—as it is to the factual situation.

The Note must, indeed, be read as it was intended by its authors: Point One stated the general principle which was to govern future policy, while this policy is outlined in detail in Points Two to Nine. And here we find that the Republic had indeed fully lived up to its undertakings.

It is, of course, debatable whether proportional representation in public functions, etc., on the basis of nationality is the ideal solution for a State with a considerable percentage of minorities. For the reverse side of such proportional representation is the *numerus clausus*. What the minority claims as a minimum demand the State is entitled to consider a maximum. This is bound to lead to harmful restrictions in all fields where free enterprise and individual talent are decisive. The State can apportion jobs in strict numerical proportion to railway workers, postmen, bailiffs and midwives; but the principle becomes more difficult of application when it is a question of professorships or achievements in the fields of science and the arts. The Czechoslovak Minister of Education asserted in 1937 that he had awarded two State prizes for German works of art, “in place of only one prize awarded in 1936.” This is manifestly absurd—as is every principle driven to its logical extreme. The Germans complained that the Jews in Germany captured an undue proportion of Nobel prizes and supplied talented scientists, artists, actors and philosophers far in excess of the one per cent. of the total to which their numerical proportion would have entitled them. Or imagine an agitation against the “undue” proportion of Scotsmen who have achieved prominence in England.

No, from all points of view the system of proportional national representation must be admitted to be inadequate. However, what other alternative could be found in a State which had not as yet had time to establish an all-embracing State consciousness transcending clannish particularism? Had this State unity existed, a system of numerical parity might have worked for a time until the new State had outgrown its initial difficulties. But this would have necessitated a free development, unhampered by outside interference and hostility, and actively supported by friendly democratic nations. The reverse, however, was the case; in fact, hostile interference was actually encouraged even by those to whom Czechoslovakia’s strength and security should have been a primary concern.

The new State was indeed composed of some diverse elements, both as regards race and language, and religion. Of Czechoslovakia’s 15 million inhabitants, the Czechoslovaks, with nearly 10 million, formed an absolute majority of 67 per cent. 3½ million Germans,

constituting 22.32 per cent. were by far the largest minority, followed by 700,000 Hungarians (5 per cent.), and some 80,000 Poles (0.56 per cent.). The Jewish minority amounted to 190,000 (1.3 per cent.), but this figure only comprises Jews claiming Jewish nationality. Israelites in Czechoslovakia totalled 357,000 (2.4 per cent.), but many of them chose "Czechoslovak" nationality.

Then there were 550,000 Ruthenians (3.8 per cent.), in a compact territory in the East, who had freely decided to form part of the Czechoslovak Republic. In addition there were splinters of other nationalities.

No less chequered was the picture as regards religion. It will surprise many to learn that nearly three-quarters of the citizens were Roman Catholics. Protestants of all denominations totalled only 7.6 per cent., while members of the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox Churches numbered 5 per cent. A peculiar phenomenon was the so-called Czechoslovak Church whose 800,000 adherents, chiefly in Bohemia and Moravia, having seceded from the Roman Catholic Church, formed 5.3 per cent. of the total.

This religious diversity merits consideration, since it expresses the result of historical developments which have shaped Czechoslovakia.

The movement towards Protestantism initiated by John Hus and his followers was effectively checked by the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. Henceforward the Counter-Reformation of the Catholic Church with its customary paraphernalia, Jesuits, inquisition, the burning of heretics, had a free hand. The country was forcibly catholicised and, since under the Habsburgs Roman Catholicism was the only recognised State religion, only a few thousand Protestants adhered to their Sect, the "Union of Bohemian Brethren." A change came only under the Emperor Joseph II, the successor of bigoted and intolerant Maria Theresia. In 1784 his Edict of Tolerance allowed free worship to Protestants, but no other creed. In the nineteenth century rationalism and agnosticism took such a strong foothold in Bohemia that even nowadays nearly six per cent. of the population declare themselves of no confession.

This phenomenon is explained by the fact that with very few exceptions the Catholic hierarchy had been fanatical supporters of Habsburg rule, and therefore of German domination. The national movement, gradually gathering strength throughout the nineteenth century, had to establish itself against the powerful influence of the priests.

Since the Roman Catholic Church, taking, as everywhere, the side of the stronger and of established authority, was unpopular in Bohemia, national feeling produced the so-called Czechoslovak Church. This preserves the dogma and much of the ritual of Rome, but allows its

priests to marry and uses the vernacular in its services. The adherents of this faith are chiefly to be found in Bohemia where they constitute nearly nine per cent. of the population. The Czechoslovak Church has united itself to the Serb Church. It is intensely national and rejects all allegiance to Rome.

Religious denominations show startling variety in the constituent parts of the country, and statistics dealing merely with the whole of Czechoslovakia are apt to be misleading. In Carpathian Ruthenia, for instance, Roman Catholics, with under 10 per cent., are a minority, whereas no fewer than 50 per cent. of the inhabitants are Greek Catholics, another 15 per cent. Orthodox, and over 14 per cent. are Israelites.

The man who shaped Czechoslovakia's destiny in the political field has also played an eminent part in her religious life. Masaryk evolved a system of ethics which might be considered—and has been claimed by some—as a religion. True, Masaryk has not codified his system: his observations on morals and ethics, God and mankind, are to be found throughout his writings. Broadly speaking, Masaryk postulates harmony, not antagonism, between science and religion. With the belief in a personal God he combines the conviction that Truth is indivisible, and that the findings of modern science do not disprove but confirm the intuitive faith of the human spirit. It is impossible to compress Masaryk's lofty teachings into a brief survey; yet no reader of his works can fail to be struck by the sublime nobility, the truly humanistic breadth of his conceptions. Very rarely has history conceded Plato's demand that the philosopher should rule the State: in the case of Masaryk success was undoubted.

But society cannot live by wise precepts alone. The material functions are essential to the viability of a State. In this respect Czechoslovakia possessed one of the soundest foundations in Europe. The population was fairly evenly divided between agriculture, industry and trade—35 per cent. in agriculture and allied occupations, 35 per cent. in industry, the remaining 30 per cent. in trade, public services, etc. These figures, based on the statistics for 1930, show an additional progress of industrialisation as compared with the Habsburg era. Here, too, the figures for the component parts of the country must be appreciated. Bohemia and Moravia show a marked preponderance of industry whereas Slovakia and Carpatho-Ruthenia are given over to agriculture, including forestry. The material riches of the country are considerable, consisting of many precious minerals, including coal and lignite, and large timber resources. A most valuable asset are the many springs whose curative properties have developed Czechoslovakia's world-famous spas and thus contributed very large "invisible exports" to the national economy.

Coal was found chiefly in the north of the country, in Ostrava and near the Těšín area, which formed the object of a dispute with Poland. Poland, herself amply supplied with coal, forcibly annexed this area when Czechoslovakia lay prostrate under German aggression. In 1938 Poland produced 38 million metric tons of coal, Czechoslovakia only 13.8 million excluding lignite.

Czechoslovak industry was largely an inheritance from the Austro-Hungarian empire, most of whose important light and heavy industries were situated in Bohemia and Moravia. This legacy was no unmitigated blessing to the young Republic, for many of these industries catered for luxury trades and were thus first and hardest hit by the depression. On the other hand, such industries often consisted of small units located in semi-rural districts. Most of the workers in the factories owned a little plot of land, and thus unemployment was not always synonymous with complete destitution. The high figures of unemployed which, however, had been reduced by one half in 1938, must be read in this light.

Industrial life and social legislation, like all other fields of activity, were permeated with the spirit of modern and progressive democracy. Industrial relations were dominated by collective contracts which were gradually made obligatory for both workers and employers. Trade unions had greatly increased their membership, and so had various professional unions catering for "white collar" workers—civil servants, teachers, professional men and artists. These trade unions administered unemployment relief on the lines of the so-called Ghent system which empowers the trade unions to pay relief out of membership dues, heavily supplemented by the State. There was no "means test" in Czechoslovakia, and social welfare was advanced through many progressive measures far ahead of other countries. Thus, for instance, a recent law restricted the right of employers to close down a factory or dismiss more than 10 per cent. of the workers without previous consultation with a Government inspector and a works committee. Working hours and overtime were stringently regulated—the eight-hour day was one of the first laws of the Republic—as was health and accident insurance. The range of health services extended to all employees, including farm labourers and household servants as well as office workers. Liberal compensation was paid in respect of illness, accident, invalidity and old age (nearly £9 million in 1936), and pension funds provided for all superannuated workers and employees. In 1934 £8 million were paid out in pensions alone. Holidays with pay were assured to all. In fact, social legislation in Czechoslovakia was well in advance of many other countries, and a good deal of the much-discussed Beveridge Report was realised years ago in Czechoslovakia.

Special labour courts were set aside which dealt with all complaints not settled by direct negotiation, pertaining to such matters as conditions of work, pay disputes and discharges. As we shall see at a later stage, the minorities not only shared in all these benefits, but in the case of the German minority it was proved that it received over 42 per cent. of the total State relief for unemployment, although representing but 22.5 per cent. of the total population.

As the whole of Czechoslovak democracy, the State's attitude to labour was built on the teachings of Masaryk. As far back as 1898 Masaryk had said this on the ethical and metaphysical significance of labour :

“ Only through labour do we become men, independent characters. A man who does not labour is not independent. Nor is a people that does not. Without labouring, we never have sufficient confidence in ourselves. Only through labour do we realise our strength. Labour is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge means labour. Whoever does not labour is a superstitious person, a beggar, a vagabond, who waits for a miracle ; by the miracle he wants to live. And since one cannot live without labouring, there is nothing left but to enslave others. Therefore we rid ourselves by labour of our innate spirit of violence. Love for our neighbour is labour. Love is labour. Therefore we think that where ethics, prayer or education fail, labour will help. Thus labour becomes a remedy, not only in prisons, for man can everywhere be improved by labour. Through labour character is formed, and indeed not only the character of the individual, but also of types and classes. The sociologists make a distinction between the military and the industrial type ; Maurice speaks also of the knightly class and the merchant class. There is no doubt that every such class, so far as it is exclusively based on one mode of labour, is one-sided and imperfect.

“ A few words on the metaphysical significance of labour. Not only man, but the whole of society, nay the whole of nature, is continually at work. The modern theory of progress and development implies a theory of labour, in the sense that every step takes place through labour, unconscious labour. Nature and society are a single, gigantic workshop. But not a completely mechanical slave-workshop. In so far as labour for us men is a means to an end, we are concerned with this end which the nation and the whole of mankind have in view. And through labour it attains this end, the ideal. The understanding of labour, the proper understanding of that which is labour, should be a universal philosophy of labour. I would call it *Synergism*, viz., that through his share of labour everyone of us can make a valid contribution to the development or even bring it to a stop. Man is by nature a person labouring to shape the world.”

It must not, of course, be assumed that Czechoslovakia was a terrestrial paradise. Metaphysical truths have to be translated into reality through the medium of the political machinery which, in a democracy, means party politics. And Czechoslovakia's internal politics suffered from a multiplicity of parties, whose conflicting claims were often motivated by a desire for the spoils and perquisites of office rather than by disinterestedness. However, a system of coalition government partly offset the disadvantages of party multiplicity. Yet patronage and connections proved to be—all too often, as I, too, have experienced—an important factor in public appointments. True, above it all there was a fervent patriotic spirit which at the crucial moment overcame party division to a large extent. This spirit was symbolised in Beneš's unwavering idealism and faith in the principles of Democracy. Typical of him is political credo as summed up for the younger generation :

"I. Life is and always will be a struggle ; the first principle of life is to struggle honourably ; understand, never despair, have a healthy optimism.

"II. Be orderly. In a period of science and precision machines, only an exact worker can be successful.

"III. To the intellectual worker : become a specialist in some particular branch of your subject and so protect yourself from superficiality.

"IV. Gradually transform your work into an achievement and therefore into a joy : therein lies the key to happiness in the world.

"V. Do your work with consciousness of responsibility ; accept responsibility honourably and frankly.

"VI. Develop yourself into a harmoniously balanced being, a synthesis of head and heart.

"VII. For us Czechoslovaks especially, this means rising out of our Slav provincialism, becoming Europeans and really being what the French call *citoyens du monde*.

"This is and always has been my personal credo, and according to it I have always striven to do my work—only thus do I find satisfaction in it. Success, final success, can only come where honour, uprightness and truthfulness prevail. But this does not mean that truth conquers of itself. The motto 'Truth Conquers' means that it is incumbent upon us to work for truth, to help it, and to fight for it unceasingly."

Beneš has wonderfully vindicated these postulates in his life and work. His moral strength—his opponents call it his weakness—lay in his unwavering adherence to the "law that governed his inception." Dr. Beneš has countered the reproof of his opponents by stating that : "the continuity of Czechoslovak policy was one of its main principles.

The deeper causes of this continuity lay in the circumstance that the Czechs were Democrats by nature. They had no aristocratic traditions ; in origin they were all peasants, artisans or labourers. Democracy had failed in some countries because it had formed political blocs, which stood in extreme opposition to each other and had fought each other . . . (The Czechs) had pursued a policy of national unity and had a coalition government. To quarrel among themselves was a luxury they had to forgo. The nation had a healthy instinct, and common sense had always been predominant . . .”

Among the many expressions of Slav patriotism there was one symbol which must be mentioned—the Sokol Movement. This gymnastic movement has been of the greatest influence for the development of Czechoslovak patriotism. The name *Sokol* means “Falcon.” The organisation was founded in 1862 by Miroslav Tyrš, Professor of Æsthetics at Prague University. Its development was rapid. The “Sokol ” programme, non-political but progressive and intensely patriotic, endeavoured to harmonise the accomplishments of body and spirit according to the Greek ideal of *kalokagathia*, or the Roman idea of *mens sana in corpore sano*. How useful this movement was to the nation under Habsburg rule and after was proved, for instance, by the remarkable endurance displayed by the Czechoslovak Legion during the last war. Gymnastics on a national scale taught these men to be good citizens who were well able to defend their country, should the need arise. The Sokol, without aiming at producing record achievements, created an exceptionally good standard of national physique. It was truly a national organisation, numbering nearly a million members. Embodying the ideal of Slav solidarity, the Movement also spread to other countries where it achieved equal popularity—Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Poland.

One of the greatest features of the movement were its periodical national rallies—*slets*—held in Prague. No one who saw them will ever forget them. Here was nothing reminiscent of the machine-like drill that characterises similar German events. There was an atmosphere of joy and vigour—displays in the Sokol Stadium where seventeen thousand girls or thirty thousand men performed gymnastics in perfect harmony and unity of movement, dancing in the streets, colourful national costumes—you saw a nation joyously alive. At such moments Czechoslovak unity became a reality.

The Sokol was, of course, disbanded soon after the German occupation. The Germans knew what a powerful source and potential rallying point of national strength the Sokol represented. So it will remain despite terror and oppression, and when freedom dawns again for Prague, new hosts of Sokols will march through its streets . . .

CHAPTER FOUR

IDEALISM AND REALITY

FOR twenty years, the whole of Czechoslovakia's independent life her foreign policy was shaped and directed by Dr. Beneš. In assessing this policy we must not rely solely on its eventual failure; for this failure was brought about by outside factors—the same forces that did their utmost to impede the peaceful development of the new State and to disrupt its structure. Success or failure alone cannot be the criterium of a policy; for in the last resort a policy built on the complete absence of moral principles must fail, however promising its initial successes; while the seeming failure of a policy based on sincere, democratic conceptions will not last for ever. In the case of Dr. Beneš we can see already that his policy, much criticised at the time, has been vindicated by events, and proved to have been right.

The new State was not only, as its enemies alleged, the result of the decomposition of an empire and the impotence of its neighbours; it was also an experiment in modern, progressive democracy. It could exist and prosper only on the basis of peace and co-operation, both at home and internationally. Consequently Dr. Beneš's policy had a double aspect. One was the preservation of the *status quo*. The States whose imperialism had prevented the attainment of Czechoslovak independence must not be allowed to indulge in irredentist activities, or to form combinations hostile—and eventually fatal—to Czechoslovakia. Anything tending to facilitate such reconstructions, such as Hungary's claims to the Slav territories formerly under her rule, or the Austrian *Anschluss*, must be opposed.

The other, complementary, aspect of Beneš's policy was reliance on international solidarity as expressed in the League of Nations, and the conception of collective security. Among the forces striving for peace, Czechoslovakia took a leading place, for both her self-interest and the ideals of her founders demanded a long, lasting peace, so that the country could fully develop its resources and potentialities.

But peace is not a merely negative concept—the absence of armed conflict. Its price is eternal vigilance and insistence, not on a dead, static *status quo*, but on dynamic development in the right direction. Sometimes the difference is not easily discerned. When Beneš, for instance, opposed the Austro-German *Anschluss*, he was often blamed for a too rigid insistence on the *status quo*. Yet events proved him right. The Austro-German union, demanded with such clamour by all sections of the Austrian people, was not a question of national self-determination. Dr. Beneš recognised its true nature, as but another

step on the way to Pan-Germanism and its preparations for a second world war. In opposing the Anschluss, Dr. Beneš anticipated not only what was to happen to Czechoslovakia—encirclement by Germany—but also the decision taken at Teheran by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, which postulates the independence of Austria as a necessity for European peace.

Peace, Dr. Beneš rightly recognised, must rest on collective security ; and thus Czechoslovakia, a medium-sized State, needed allies. Her natural ally was predetermined by the Treaty of Versailles, which formed her birth certificate. France, the paramount military power on the Continent, needed the succession States along Germany's south-eastern borders. Poland and especially Czechoslovakia, "that wedge pointing straight at the heart of Germany," must remain strong and vigilant. Rumania and Yugoslavia joined Czechoslovakia in forming the Little Entente, one of whose aims was the effective encirclement of Hungary with a view to neutralising any aggressive, revisionist adventures on her part. France seemed to possess a secure system of alliances with all these States, which indeed owed much to the French makers of the peace treaties of Versailles, Trianon and St. Germain. In later years this assurance was strengthened by France's alliance with Russia. Henceforth the Russian hammer could be expected to drive the Czech wedge into the body of Germany, should Germany ever attempt to provoke another European war.

This system could have worked very well—on one assumption. This was a very natural assumption, and one that Dr. Beneš was perfectly entitled to make, namely, that France was going to maintain her military strength unimpaired and would, politically, act in accordance with her own best interests. France, after all, had been the battlefield of a German-provoked war for the second time in living memory ; for the second time France had been bled white for the sake of Alsace-Lorraine ; and for the second time in recent history France had emerged as the foremost military power on the continent of Europe.

But neither Dr. Beneš nor other European statesmen could foresee the one factor that was going to upset this state of things. England, still wedded to the old conception of the balance of power, could not, so British statesmen thought, permit any single power to assume military hegemony on the Continent. The paramount military power after the war was France. And since France's strength lay not only in her military potential, but also, to a great extent, in her system of European alliances, certain British politicians did everything in their power to assist Germany in regaining her strength, and to prevent the Little Entente powers developing their full possibilities as a counter-weight to Germany. The revindications of Hungary found willing

ears in certain British circles, and a scandalous echo in a certain press which reviled Britain's erstwhile allies while promoting the spurious claims of her enemies.

For many years, long before Hitler came to power, this deliberate strengthening of Germany was noticeable, and witnessed with alarm by the small and medium-sized States of Central and South-Eastern Europe. While France was weakening herself, reducing her armament and falling prey to economic and political crises that boded ill for her future strength, Germany was waxing more powerful. Behind the façade of the Weimar Republic the real rulers of Germany had remained in the saddle. These Junkers were again facing east and south-eastwards, towards the old "colonial" territories which, wrested from their Slav inhabitants, had laid the foundations for the ascendancy of Prussia in Germany, and the Prussian spirit of aggression throughout the German lands. In the south-east, Silesia, another Slav area forcibly taken away from its Slavonic inhabitants, formed a dangerous wedge between Poland and Czechoslovakia: an arsenal of armaments manufacture and a strategic bastion. Germany's age-old "Drang nach Osten" was rampant again. Even before Hitler's official accession to power, German reactionaries and chauvinists of all hues—the Deutsch-Nationale, the League for Germanity Abroad, the illegal terrorist organisations known as *Freikorps*, *Schwarze Reichswehr*, etc.—openly proclaimed that not only Poland but also Czechoslovakia were going to be the target of their next "fresh and joyous war."

But where could Czechoslovakia look for help? It is true that strong bonds of sympathy united Czechoslovakia with Russia. But Beneš, not without good cause, was chary of committing Czechoslovakia's destiny to Russia, realising that the price of Russian assistance might be the acceptance of Russian domination. Russia, in addition, was still in the throes of her post-revolutionary internal conflicts, and the Third International, not yet dissolved, threatened to spread internal unrest in Europe. And finally, the military strength of the Soviet Union had not yet become evident; indeed, following the spectacular trials of highly placed Red Army officers, Russia's military power was rated rather low by many objective observers.

Thus Czechoslovakia had to rely on her alliances with France and the States of the Little Entente, while Russian backing was assured only indirectly. And all the time the menacing rise of German and Italian Fascism became an ever-mounting tide, eroding and undermining the European order built up at Versailles, Trianon and St. Germain.

When Hitler was given power by an overwhelming majority of the German people in 1933, this fact constituted, not the beginning but

merely the visible manifestation of the process of German preparations for World War II that had been going on ever since the last shot was fired on November 11, 1918. Yet only a few people in Europe realised that Hitler meant war. Among the few statesmen who did not pooh-pooh as alarmism and "atrocious stories" the warnings of refugees from Germany—refugees who were given generous asylum in free Czechoslovakia—was Dr. Beneš. He was one of the few who had troubled to read *Mein Kampf*, and taken it seriously. But the rest of the world chose to disregard this cynically clear statement of Germany's plans—just as it refused to take cognisance of Nazi persecution of Jews, and the thin stratum of progressives and intellectuals to be found in Germany. Such persecution, be it ever so inhuman, was considered Germany's "domestic concern," and not to be interfered with from abroad. This rotten doctrine of non-interference, as long as State "only" kills its own Jews, exterminates its own citizens, corrupts the minds of its own young generation, has cost Europe dearly. Spain and Czechoslovakia were the first victims of this wilful blindness; let us hope that never again will the civilised world permit the existence of a plague spot from which the pestilence must spread throughout the world . . .

The first symptom of this spreading of the disease, Hitler's first attempt to find out how far he could go with impunity, occurred in 1935, when Hitler openly repudiated the last remnants of the Versailles Treaty and marched into the demilitarised Rhineland. We know now that his army had then no tanks or heavy artillery, very little ammunition, and orders to retreat without offering resistance, should the French march in.

France, at that time, was still sufficiently realistic to demand military counter-measures—a preventive war which would, in fact, have been a military promenade, and saved the world untold misery. But Mr. Baldwin and his Government were unwilling to back France. This lack of foresight was not the fault of any one party. All parties in Britain indulged in the fatal kind of optimism which believed that Hitler could be appeased by concessions—preferably at the expense of others. The world was just emerging from an economic crisis that had shaken the City to its foundations; and the City preferred brisk trading with a rearming Germany to war. No sacrifice (to be made by others, of course) was too great for these "hard-faced businessmen" who, as is a matter of common knowledge, continued to export scrap iron and other raw materials to Germany right up to August, 1939 . . .

But Britain was not alone in this criminal folly. Belgium, for instance, chose to cancel her treaties of military assistance with the Western Powers, and embarked on a policy of "neutrality" that

was as selfish as it was shortsighted, extending what amounted to an open invitation to Germany to outflank the Maginot Line. Other European States joined in this policy of inertia, and Dr. Beneš, realising that a catastrophe was impending, found Czechoslovakia in a difficult international position.

He may have counted too much on the strength of the Little Entente. The Little Entente was a political conception rather than a political reality, and certainly not a factor of military importance. Its main purpose was to keep Hungary down, and to prevent a Habsburg restoration. In both these aims it was, for a time, successful ; but never were these three heterogeneous States able to evolve anything approaching political unity or even co-ordination in a wider sphere. It cannot even be said that they represented the idea of Democracy, as against the Dictatorships. Czechoslovakia was the only one of the three partners to have attained a state of complete democracy. In Yugoslavia* democracy had been undermined by Germany and international Fascism ; King Alexander, himself a friend of Barthou—one of the few Frenchmen to foresee the danger from Germany—had to establish a personal dictatorship which, after his assassination, was followed by an equally undemocratic Regency. As for Rumania, she was, as always, riddled with graft, corruption and disunity ; and while she was something of a democratic factor so long as her able Foreign Minister, Titulescu, was in power, Rumania became a mere tool of Fascism when Titulescu was dismissed under German pressure.

In addition, the three States of the Little Entente each had their internal worries, chiefly minority problems. Czechoslovakia's difficulties with her component groups found their counterpart in the Serb-Croat troubles, while Rumania had considerable Hungarian and other minorities which under Fascist instigation continued to give trouble. All this prevented the Little Entente from deploying its full strength.

In this situation Dr. Beneš did what he could. Czechoslovakia's war potential was increased, a sacrifice willingly borne by a nation that loves peace but has given ample proof of valour in the field. This increased preparedness must go hand in hand with a policy that must avoid giving Germany the slightest pretext for aggression, while appealing constantly to that European solidarity on the part of the Great Powers which they so sadly failed to demonstrate. One thing Beneš would not do, nor would the people have tolerated any government that might have acted thus : to come to terms with Hitlerite Germany in the manner of the semi-Fascist government of Poland.

* See *Invincible Yugoslavia*, by Alliance Press, London.

In 1934, Colonel Beck had signed a ten years' treaty of friendship with Nazi Germany, falling in line with many Nazi demands. As events proved, even this policy of compliance failed to prolong the independent life of Poland beyond the term envisaged by Hitler at the outset.

There were abundant signs that the whole of Central Europe was in a state of flux ; that the old boundaries had become fluid ; and the little politicians everywhere hurried to come to terms with Hitler. Beneš alone would not believe that the Western Democracies would betray the principles for which they had fought side by side with the Czechs in the war "to make the world safe for democracy." And so he clung to his tenets with unwavering faith. He was, after all, one of the chief exponents of the doctrine of the Fourteen Points, and in the eyes of the Germans closely connected with the Treaty of Versailles—which explains Hitler's virulent personal hatred for the Czech statesman. But however faithful President Beneš was to his principles, they were at that time against the tide of events. The key to the situation lay not in Prague, but in London and Paris.

Beneš missed no opportunity of showing his desire to live on terms of good neighbourhood with Germany. In his heart he knew—and later stated—that democracies and dictatorships cannot peaceably co-exist ; but in order not to give Hitler a pretext, Dr. Beneš was prepared to go far on the road of concessions. He had to make the best of a frightful situation, and when we review some of his past utterances we have to see them in the light of conditions then prevailing. Thus, he addressed the German minority in a speech at Reichenberg (Liberec), the centre of the densest German conglomeration in Northern Bohemia, on August 19, 1936, appealing to them to model themselves on the classic figures of the German spirit, men like Herder, Goethe, Schiller and Lessing. The people he was addressing were the same who, a short time before, had murdered another Lessing—Theodor Lessing, a pacifist professor who had fled from Germany and who at Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně) was struck down by Sudeten German murderers who escaped to Germany.

Following this appeal to Germany's long-dead better self, the President addressed a thinly veiled appeal to the Great Powers, saying : "I am to-day convinced that the Locarno Powers . . . will come to some agreement about collaboration in Europe and that good neighbourly relations on a treaty basis will be arrived at between Germany and ourselves."

On the same day President Beneš spoke on the great lines of Czechoslovak policy—the three pillars on which her political orientation was to remain, as it had done for the past eighteen years. And again we see President Beneš making a statement which is really an appeal—

an urgent reminder to the Great Powers not to forget their duties and the responsibility entailed by their dominant position—when he exclaimed: “The first pillar of our peace policy has always been and will always continue to be the League of Nations . . . as the focus of the policies that seek mutual agreement and equilibrium among the Great Powers, and as a guarantee of the position and influence of the smaller States and nations.”

These words were not an expression of blind optimism. Beneš had seen the League powerless to stop Japan's rape of Manchuria in 1931; he had seen it unable to save Abyssinia from Mussolini's grasp; he was witnessing even then international Fascism holding its first realistic manoeuvres in Spain, while the League, degraded to a mere tool in the game of power politics, had to enact the sorry farce of non-intervention. What Dr. Beneš was trying to do was to stir up the last spark of that European solidarity which to him was an article of faith.

The second pillar of Czechoslovak policy, President Beneš stated, was the policy of the Little Entente. The third pillar finally was support for Czechoslovakia from “those States” that comprehend and would be willing to support this European policy of hers, that would help us to carry the policy through and would enable us to preserve the new status in Central Europe.” In other words, President Beneš was once more appealing to European solidarity against the forces of reaction.

He then went on to particularise specific factors in Czechoslovak policy. “Our relations to England,” he said, “have always been flawless and found their solution in the relations and collaboration that have existed between England and France.” The President then dealt with relations with Germany. He expressed the desire of the overwhelming majority of the Czechoslovaks to have good and friendly relations with Germany, and then stressed his desire to see a German-French agreement achieved. He said: “Agreement between Paris and Berlin signifies an automatic solution of many difficulties, too, between Berlin and Prague which arise as a consequence of the general European tension. Our whole policy hitherto has been conducted in the light of this fact.”

If President Beneš erred in not foreseeing that any such agreement would be based on the concession to Germany of a “free hand” in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, he erred in good company and from the highest motives. He was too good a European, too great a democrat, too steeped in a tradition of civilised solidarity, to suspect the abject and cowardly spirit of self-emasculation and betrayal in the Western Democracies which was to culminate in the foul bargain struck at Munich. Yet Beneš sensed the drift of events correctly,

and therefore concluded his speech with truly prophetic words. He could not openly denounce Germany's intended aggression, already clearly discernible to his acute observation ; so he cloaked the cry of havoc in the mantle of a denial. He said : " The assertion . . . that Germany intends to menace the existence of our State I regard as simply absurd. *To attempt to-day to lay a hand upon the existence of a fifteen-million State and a ten-million nation in the middle of Europe would mean to evoke a European catastrophe.*"

His words came true. Europe acquiesced in Hitler's rape of Austria, Europe became guilty of complicity in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and Europe was overwhelmed by the catastrophe that Beneš had predicted.

Did Dr. Beneš policy fail ? The answer is that he chose the best path available under the circumstances ; that, since Czechoslovakia by herself was unable to influence events, the blame for what happened must rest with the reactionary near-fascist cliques in Britain and France ; and that, while for a time at least all but honour seemed lost, the course of this war has gloriously vindicated the principles of Masaryk and Beneš.

CHAPTER FIVE

CZECHS AND GERMANS

MUCH has been spoken and written on the German problem in Czechoslovakia, and in an attempt to solve it the Czechoslovak Government went far beyond the limit of concessions tolerable to a sovereign State. All attempts at a peaceable solution were, however, doomed to failure, because the problem was not the relations of the Germans in Czechoslovakia with the State, but the relations of Nazi Germany with the rest of Europe. And here there was no room for compromise even on the most liberal basis: for the aim of Germany was not to obtain satisfaction of grievances, honest or imaginary, but to invent and aggravate grievances as a means for the realisation of power politics. The old fable of the wolf and the lamb comes to mind: the wolf will always find a reason for devouring the lamb.

Czechoslovakia's behaviour towards her minorities was characterised by a desire for fairness and conciliation; and whatever grievances the German minority had, derived from their jealousy at being deprived of the predominant position which they had so long enjoyed in Bohemia. From the outset the majority of the German population in Czechoslovakia was hostile to the State, and refused to shoulder its proportionate share of responsibility for its administration for many years: not till 1926 did German ministers enter the Government.

Some German writers have claimed that Germans have been autochthonous in Bohemia since recorded historical times; but the consensus of opinion, including even German historians, denies this. Some sources assert that in the seventh century a Frankish chieftain, Samo, expelled the Avars from Bohemia and founded the first Slav State; but this story is not supported by historic data. We find the first reliable mention of Bohemia at the time of Charlemagne who, when he formed his Holy Roman Empire, the successor of the Roman Empire, first clashed with his Slav neighbours: the tribes east of the river Elbe, and the Czech inhabitants of Bohemia. In 845 fourteen Czech chieftains were baptised at Ratisbon, and Charlemagne's successors considered Slav Bohemia a tributary of the Empire. This claim, however, was not recognised by the Bohemian and Moravian rulers, who would submit only under compulsion, and after being defeated in battle by the German emperors.

At about that time, further east in what is now Slovakia, there arose one of the earliest conglomerations of Slav States, the Great Moravian Empire. It comprised almost the whole of present-day Czechoslovakia, and accepted the Eastern brand of Christianity as

introduced by the first Bishops (and Saints) Cyril and Methodius. Under the mighty King Svatopluk that empire attained its greatest extent, fighting successfully against the Magyars.

After Svatopluk's death Magyar raids caused the break-up of the Great Moravian Empire, and while Slovakia fell under Hungarian domination, Carolingian influence succeeded in banishing the Eastern form of worship and introducing the creed of Rome in Bohemia and Moravia. Western Christianity became a strong influence in Bohemia. The Slav language was ousted from the Service by Latin, and henceforth all cultural influence came to Bohemia from the West, that is, through Germany. Constitutional forms, art and such literature as there was represented the victory of the Latinised West over the Slavonic East.

Objective Czechoslovaks have recognised this historical fact. Dr. Kamil Krofta—Czechoslovakia's Foreign Minister after Dr. Beneš' assumption of the Presidency—said in a lecture delivered in 1934 :

“ In this victory of the German West over the Slav East the Czechs need not see a misfortune to their national development ; on the contrary, most of them recognise the advantages derived therefrom . . . The Czechs need not blame their German neighbours for having enabled them to turn their backs on the East and join the Latin culture of the West.”

Czechs and Germans were two distinct races bordering on each other. Their relations have been both a struggle and an interplay of cultures, with a generally higher level and consequently greater contribution on the part of the German element. The great Czech historian, František Palacký, writing a hundred years ago, was inclined to stress what he considered an *a priori* dissimilarity between the Czech and the German national character ; in his view the Germans were always and without exception the brutal conquerors, while the ancient Slavs, peaceful “like doves,” were living in an ideal state of Democracy. But Palacký stood perhaps too close to the cataclysmic events of 1848 to recognise the real tragedy underlying Czech-German relations : the fact that German power was politically in the ascendant over the Slavs at the precise periods when Germany identified itself with reaction. In other words, the liberal periods of both nations never coincided. Added to this there was the fact that while milder forms of “enlightened absolutism” at times prevailed in parts of Southern and Western Germany, this was never the case in Prussia—the state whose power was based on the brutal subjection and oppression of the Slavs, and whose influence progressively dominated the rest of Germany. Thus the Germans never knew real freedom ; they never experienced a real revolution ever since the great Peasants' Rising of 1525 had been stifled in blood. The Czechs, on the other hand, have been longing

for freedom and liberty ever since Hussite days, and were the first to evolve the completely un-German conception of international understanding. It was a Czech, Jiří of Poděbrady, who made the first attempt to form a league of nations.

The Germans thus often appeared as the foreign oppressors who denationalised Czech culture: in 1620, when the Catholic princes of Germany suppressed the Reformation in Bohemia and put an end to national independence: in 1815, when Metternich and his Holy Alliance effectively suppressed throughout Europe the liberal tendencies left behind by the armies of revolutionary France: in 1830, when the Czechs saw Austria and Russia jointly putting down the Polish rising; in 1848, when the short-lived liberal intoxication, which united Germans and Czechs in the pursuit of Democracy, was soon followed by the Greater German conception proclaimed at Frankfurt, and the hangover of Habsburg autocracy. The last instance of this non-synchronisation could be seen in the period between the wars, when Czechoslovakia's struggle for a democratic way of life was frustrated by Germany's development towards aggressive Fascism.

It can hardly be denied that there have been periods of peaceful co-existence between Czechs and Germans. During the early Middle Ages the Holy Roman Empire was to the Czechs, as to other peripheral nations, not so much a German as a universal and Christian institution. Thus we find early Czech chroniclers in the seventeenth century asserting their people's loyalty to the Emperor, while at the same time stressing that the Czechs wished to maintain their traditional native laws and customs.

This is probably an allusion to the fact that German settlers, chiefly miners and artisans, who were invited into Bohemia, remained subject to their own German law which they naturally strove to apply to their dealings with the native population.

In the thirteenth century the Princes of Bohemia had acquired the permanent style of Kings, and the question now arose whether these non-German Princes could become Electors, and thus eventually might attain the dignity of Emperor. For a long time the right of Election was denied to the King of Bohemia, and it was only a hundred years later that the question was decided, when Charles IV, King of Bohemia, became Emperor. This turned into a reality the old dream of the Czechs, the *translatio imperii ad Bohemos*, which in their eyes was the surest means of counteracting German preponderance. For in the meantime the first stirrings of nationalism were felt throughout the Holy Roman Empire, and the Czechs credited the German Emperors with the desire to subjugate and even destroy the Czechs. The elevation of Charles IV to imperial dignity temporarily put an end to this friction. Prague became the cultural and political centre of the

Holy Roman Empire. Its university—the first university in Central Europe—attracted thousands of students from German as well as Slav countries, and also from Hungary, which was still without a place of higher learning. The splendour of the Imperial Court, the many magnificent buildings, the presence of political and intellectual leaders of the day made Prague a truly cosmopolitan city. Western influence was strong in the cultural field, benefiting the Czechs who derived added pride from their membership of the Empire in which, according to Charles IV, Bohemia was “one of the noblest members.” Incidentally, the modern German language in its best form originated, not in Berlin, then a miserable village of Slav fishermen, but in Prague: the German as written by the Imperial Chancellery was the language in which Luther couched his translation of the Bible.

Like all “Golden Ages,” this harmony lasted only a few decades. After Charles’s death (1378) and that of his oldest son, Wenceslas IV (1419), Sigismund, Wenceslas’s younger brother, encountered violent hatred and resistance on the part of the Czechs, then in the throes of the Hussite rising.

This elemental outburst, preceding the Reformation by a century, was decisive for the subsequent history of the Czech people and their relations with the Germans in their midst. As the eruption of a volcano determines the nature of a landscape long after the burning lava has cooled down, so the Hussite movement has shaped the Czech national character for all times. In our days religious issues have become pallid: we can no longer understand the burning intensity with which men fought and died, inflicted and suffered terrible cruelties, for the sake of dogmatic niceties, beliefs and superstitions. On the other hand, we can at this distance of time recognise motives of which the protagonists themselves were unconscious.

Thus, we now recognise a tremendous social movement, a revolt against medieval feudalism, underlying the Reformation and the various heretical movements preceding it; and at the same time they were manifestations of rising nationalism. Europe rebelled against unification. This unification had remained not much more than theoretical in the political field: the Holy Roman Empire (of which it was later said that it was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire) was a cumbersome and unwieldy piece of machinery. The almost complete absence of communications made a strong central government an impossibility, even if the feudal system had not effectively prevented centralisation.

But in the spiritual field there still remained the totalitarian idea of “Christendom,” a universalist conception bound to be hostile to national feeling. In these days of “Basic English” and other suggested world languages we all too often overlook the fact that before the

Reformation there was a universal language—Latin, used not only in writing but also in speech by the educated people of all countries. Translating the Bible into the vernacular, therefore, constituted a flagrant revolt against this universalism. And by this act of revolt man exchanged the security of an ordered cosmos, in which suitable behaviour assured him of a quiet life in this world and of reasonable chances in the next, for the new and untested gift of nationalism, which to the forces of conservatism spelt insecurity, conflict and danger.

John Hus, the most prominent of Czech church reformers, a priest who had read and extended the teachings of the English heretic, Wycliffe, arose in 1400 and attacked at the same time the supremacy of Rome and the hegemony of the German. The flames that devoured Hus's body could not destroy his teachings and grew into a conflagration which seized the whole of the Bohemian lands.

At that time the Germans were a factor of considerable strength in Bohemia. Some of the nobility and higher clergy were German, and traders, merchants and agricultural colonists from Germany had flocked into the country in their thousands. The mining industry was almost exclusively in German hands.

This influx was not motivated by a desire for imperialist expansion, but simply sprang from the fact that Bohemia was a wealthy, yet thinly populated country and in need of numerous industrious hands. The Bohemian kings granted extensive privileges to the German colonists, for they realised the advantages accruing to the country as a whole. The German element introduced Western standards of law, civic administration and industrial technique. From the twelfth century and under German influence Bohemia, hitherto largely a country of landowners and peasants, evolved an urban bourgeoisie and a middle class of traders and artisans.

The agricultural colonists occupied large tracts of country along the marginal mountain chains, and also formed German islands around a number of inland towns. These borders of language and race remained fluctuating through the centuries, often shifting considerably. This strong German minority took root in the soil and considered Bohemia its new and permanent home. The Czech nobility intermarried with Germans, many wealthy monasteries were ruled by German abbots and were endowed with large estates.

There is no doubt that this German penetration helped to raise the cultural and material level of the Czechs; but at the same time they recognised the danger of eventual complete Germanisation, as they could see before them in Silesia and Brandenburg, where the original Slav population had become completely denationalised. An early Czech chronicler, Cosmas, fulminates against "the native arrogance of the Germans who in their inflated superiority have

always despised the Slavs and their language." Yet it must be admitted that "partial Germanisation has saved the Czech people from complete Germanisation," as the great Czech historian, Jaroslav Goll, put it.

But what there is preserved of Czech literature of the last two generations before Hus reflects a growing animosity against the alien encroachment. This friction also found its expression in repeated clashes at the Prague University between Czech students and the various "nations" (Franconian, Saxon, Bavarian) into which the German students were divided.

When Hus proclaimed his message, the German clergy and the German professors naturally sided against him. Hus retaliated with a classic formulation of Czech patriotism, saying that "according to God's Law in Bohemia the Czechs must have priority in public office, just as the French in France and the Germans in their country." This incitement found a ready response from the Estates of Bohemia who, in 1419, proclaimed that "in the towns no Germans shall hold any office that Czechs are capable of filling; that pleading before the Bohemian courts must be in the Czech language; and that the Czechs must be dominant throughout the Kingdom."

The Council of Constance excommunicated Hus and handed him over to the secular arm for the appropriate treatment prescribed for those who deviated from the accepted form of the religion of Love. The Hussites retorted with a violent manifesto in which they reproached the Pope with "having called up and incited against us our natural enemies, the Germans, all round us who, however unjustly, have always hated our language and oppressed it in Prussia, and who want to oppress us, too, and occupy our positions."

Meanwhile the Hussites, under the leadership of Žižka, were spreading fire and terror throughout the country, defeating the Imperial armies everywhere. In 1420 one of their manifestos accused Emperor Sigismund of "aiming at exterminating the Czech language, giving to foreigners the positions of the Czechs, and inciting the Czechs to murder each other, so that they should fall an easy prey to the Germans and Hungarians." This is certainly a striking parallel to recent events.

The Hussite wars lasted for many years and devastated the towns of Bohemia, in some of which the German element was considerably reduced. They were even more successful in Slovakia where the German population was decimated.

In the sixteenth century two important events influenced German-Czech relations—Luther's Reformation, and the acquisition of the Crown of Bohemia by the Habsburgs. The Reformation made the Bohemian "heresy," a term against which the Hussites had protested

with flaming indignation, respectable and resulted in a rapprochement with the Germans who were now equally opposed to Rome. Luther was, indeed, strongly influenced by Hus's teachings and, on the other hand, found many supporters in Bohemia. In the advent of Luther the Czechs saw their final rehabilitation and a compensation for the injury they had suffered from the Germans. There remained dogmatic differences between the Old Hussites and the Lutherans which are without great interest now, but in 1575 both sects adopted a united "Bohemian Confession," modelled on the "Augsburg Confession" of the German Lutherans. In 1609 Emperor Rudolf II granted tolerance and full recognition to the new faith.

A new period of flourishing prosperity seemed to dawn for a Bohemia in which religious toleration had been achieved and national antagonism had receded. But reaction was on the march, and after only eleven years the catastrophe came.

The Habsburg dynasty which, until 1620, were elected kings of Bohemia with the consent of the Czech Estates, was German by origin, but more strongly wedded to Italo-Spanish culture and its powerful expression, political Catholicism. The Counter-Reformation found ardent supporters in this dynasty. In Bohemia, as in other Habsburg dominions, the Jesuits developed their well-known activities, and in 1618 there began the great Thirty Years' War which aimed at exterminating the new heresy in all Europe. Two years later, the Czechs were crushingly and decisively defeated in the battle of Bílá Hora (the White Mountain). The flower of the Czech nobility was slain, and German domination was established for three hundred years. From now on the German remained the conqueror who forcibly imposed his language and his culture. The victory of Roman-Spanish Catholicism over Czech-German Protestantism became at the same time a victory of the German language over the Czech tongue. The German language became the almost exclusive language for all official purposes. The estates of the Czech aristocrats were confiscated and handed over to a new nobility which was either German or Germanised, Spanish and Italian.

In the towns and the countryside the Slav population had been decimated. A new wave of German immigrants now flooded the country, and several regions that had hitherto been Czech were Germanised. Czech literature step by step ceased to exist: the Czech language was spoken only by oppressed serfs.

Yet a people's language possesses a tremendous power of resistance. Its roots are in the soil, and these roots, if deprived of free growth, remain embodied in the ground, dormant but not dead, until a storm cuts away the hostile forest, and a new spring allows them to flower again. Thus the Czech language resisted even the planned and

deliberate Germanisation attempted in the eighteenth century by Empress Maria Theresia and her son, Emperor Joseph II, who aimed at imposing the German language on all the nationalities of their Empire. It was even then that educated Czechs resumed the study of their history, their language, their cultural tradition. And here, curiously enough, Slavonic studies were encouraged by a new development in Germany, where the former contempt for everything Slav had changed into the exact opposite. Under the influence of Herder (who, in turn, was prompted by Rousseau) philosophers—the word sociologist did not then exist—were extolling the pristine virtues of the simple, innocent peoples, unspoilt by the vices of civilisation. Herder praised the Slavs, idealised them as the people approaching most closely to Humanitarianism and Democracy. If such a naive approach is valuable rather as an expression of criticism of contemporary social evils (as in the case of Tacitus's misleading description of the ancient Germans) it had, at the same time, a tremendous influence on the Czech intellectuals, men like Šafařík, Kollár and Palacký. What had been an instinctive patriotism suddenly crystallised into the mystical conviction that the Slav race as such had a universal human mission, not only because of its numerical strength but also on account of the special and noble qualities inherent in the Slav racial character. Herder's ideas seemed to promise the Czechs a great future, and gave their leaders strength and consolation in the hard struggle for the maintenance of their national identity. It was in this sense that Dr. Beneš in his Reichenberg speech quoted above, exhorted the Sudeten Germans to remain faithful to the spirit of Herder—in other words, a civilised European appealed to the cave-man, with the results that were to be expected.

While Czech literature was gradually awakening from its long stagnation, the Germans in Bohemia did their best to strengthen their Germanic culture. This notwithstanding, it seemed that among these Germans a new kind of Bohemian patriotism was growing which led them into a period of promising collaboration with the Czechs. Many Germans learned the Czech language, and among the learned enquirers into Czech history we find a number of authors of German origin but with pronounced Czech sympathies. But again this period of incipient harmony was all too brief. It culminated in the rousing enthusiasm of the revolutionary year 1848, when Czechs and German joined in the demand for a constitutional and democratic régime which would accord a measure of freedom to the nationalities.

But it soon became evident that the Pan-German Parliament in Frankfurt-on-Main combined with its enthusiasm for Liberalism the demand for a Greater German Empire, that was to be completely German. Romantic notions, aiming at a revival of the splendour of

the Middle Ages, when German knights "rode eastward" with sword and plough, led to the demand for an absolute preponderance of German culture everywhere. We can now see that the year 1848 marked a decisive crisis in German national development. All the wars that ravaged Europe afterwards were started by a Germany that had expelled or muzzled its Liberals, turned its back on Democracy, and had accepted Bismarck's dogma of "blood and iron." That year marked a clear break with the German cultural development of the past which had given to Europe and humanity a galaxy of thinkers, poets and artists. The Germany of Goethe, Schiller and Herder died in 1848, and the modern Germans were as little the heirs of that great tradition as the Vandals, who sacked Imperial Rome, could be said to continue the tradition of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius.*

The Czechs felt the full weight of reaction. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire they were an oppressed race, tolerated by the Germans with amused patronage. German students missed no opportunity of provoking the Czech population; indeed, the German element in Bohemia bred some of the most objectionable specimens of National-Socialist mentality long before Hitler was heard of. In Vienna, every house had its Czech porter, a figure of fun because of his broken German. Czechs were good only for menial occupations. Incidentally, the world-wide fame of the Viennese cuisine is largely based on the efficiency of the Czech women who served in Austrian households.

To oppression and contempt the Czechs opposed sullen and stubborn obstruction, until the first world war gave them their chance to strike a blow for their liberation.

* * *

After the war Czech-German antagonism remained one of the chief problems of the young Republic. With three-and-a-quarter million souls the German minority in Czechoslovakia was not only one of the largest minorities in Europe (exceeded only by the Ukrainians in Poland), but it also constituted 22.5 per cent. of Czechoslovakia's citizens. It might have been preferable to treat this large group—larger than the population of many an independent State—as an organic component of the new State rather than as a minority. But

* An objective American observer may be quoted—Ambassador J. W. Gerard, U.S. ambassador in Berlin in 1914. He wrote: "As Sainte-Beuve said, there is a fashion in intellect. The German to-day is essentially practical, cold, cynical and calculating. The poetry and the Christmas trees, the sentiment and sentimentality, remain like the architectural monuments of a vanished race, mere reminders of the kindlier Germany that once was . . . the Germany that many once loved. But that Germany has long since disappeared, buried beneath the spiked helmets of Prussianism, and another intellect is in vogue."—J. W. Gerard, *Face to Face with Kaiserism*, London, 1918.

to admit the Germans to equal partnership with the Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians was not only a psychological impossibility so soon after a victorious war against Germany: the Germans themselves, too, were unwilling to collaborate.

Yet all objective factors indicated the imperative necessity of German collaboration with the new State. Those millions of Germans were not living in one compact conglomeration, but in eight separate districts, divided by strips of preponderantly Czech territory. And even where Germans formed the great majority, there were considerable numbers of Czechs living among them. In Bohemia, the German districts comprised 305,000, in Moravia 366,000 Czechs. German language enclaves, on the other hand, were found in several districts, entirely surrounded by Slav populations. It was and is thus impossible to draw a line which would clearly separate all the Germans on one side and all the Czechs on the other. In this respect already comparison with Belgium and Switzerland, where such lines of demarcation are much more distinct, is bound to be misleading. The Sudeten Germans themselves recognised that it was impossible to form a political entity, let alone a State, from these scattered German islands. The Sudeten German Socialist, Josef Seliger, wrote in 1918:

“The eight territorial fragments in which the Germans are settled, eight territorial fragments separated from one another by broad belts of districts where the Czech language is spoken, cannot possibly form a State or a united administrative area which needs, above all, to be an economic entity. Such a formation would be without parallel in the whole world, and would, as a political State, be the utmost nonsense.”

This opinion was shared by the authors of the Versailles Peace Treaty who for these reasons rejected a request for the incorporation of the Sudeten German areas with Austria. The guarantees offered by Czechoslovakia seemed sufficient to preclude grievances.

The Czechoslovak Republic soon implemented the promises made at the Peace Conference, and a system of protection of national, religious and racial minorities was embodied in the Constitution. It was a characteristic of the Czechoslovak Nationality Law that the national minorities were not recognised as collective bodies (with or without a legal personality), nor did the nationality as such possess any rights. Minority rights were accorded only to the individual citizen, both by the guarantee of certain positive rights, such as equal franchise, and by negative provisions, such as those forbidding forcible denationalisation. Certainly each citizen had the right to adhere to his national group, but his civic duties and privileges derived, not from his membership of any national group but from his citizenship in the State. Here, too, is a palpable difference from the Swiss

system, where local citizenship is the primary factor, and Swiss citizenship is derived from it. A similar system obtained in Republican Germany where German citizenship (Reichsbürgerschaft) was acquired indirectly through Prussian, Bavarian, etc., citizenship. When German nationality was to be conferred on A. Hitler, then still technically an Austrian, he was granted citizenship of the State of Brunswick, and thus *ipso facto* became a German national.

Nationality rights in Czechoslovakia thus rested on the very broad principle of democratic equality before the law, with the provision that anything amounting to coercion of conscience was prohibited. Quoting from a Czech publication on the subject* we find that :

“ the Constitution guarantees all without distinction equal protection against forcible denationalisation (para. 134), and all the persons residing in the Republic are assured, in like measures as are its subjects, of the absolute protection of life and liberty (para. 106). Exceptions to this principle are only permitted in so far as allowed by international law. The specific equality of Czechoslovak subjects—that is, a more restricted category than that of persons resident in Czechoslovakia—applies, under the Constitution (paras. 128, 130), to the enjoyment of equal civil and political rights, to entry into the public services and offices, attainment to any dignity or to the exercise of any trade or calling, as well as to the free use of any language whatsoever—within the limits of the common law—in private and business contacts, in the press, in publications of any kind, in public meetings and in the exercise of religion ; as well as equal rights of founding, conducting and administering at their own cost, and in accord with the general law of the land, philanthropic, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational institutions, and to the free use therein of their own language.**

“ Among other internal regulations, based upon the principle of absolute equality of rights, there is, in the first place, protection of nationality by means of sanctions ; any person who publicly incites others to acts of violence or other unfriendly action against individual sections of the population on account of their nationality, language or race, is guilty of a misdemeanour punishable by imprisonment varying from one month to one year. Any person who incites others to hatred of individual sections of the population on account of their nationality, language or race is liable to punishment varying from 14 days to six months. Anyone who publicly incites others to acts

* Czechoslovak Sources and Documents No. 25, Prague, 1938.

** To avoid misunderstanding, it should be added that the right of founding schools “ at their own cost ” means private schools. As regards the State schools, the Germans had more of them, proportionally, than the Czechs. Most schools in the Czechoslovak Republic were maintained by the State.

of violence or other unfriendly action against an individual on account of his nationality, language or race is guilty of a misdemeanour punishable with imprisonment varying from eight days to three months. Similar penalties are provided for any person who in gross and coarse fashion publicly calumniates the nation or a racial minority in a manner calculated to lower esteem of the Republic or to endanger public order in the Republic or adversely affect its international relations (para. 14 of the Defence of the Republic Act, No. 50 in the Collection of Laws and Decrees of 1923). These penalties protect all nationalities in equal fashion, and they protect not only Czechoslovak subjects, but also the subjects of other countries. In addition to this, sanctions are provided to protect nationality from oppression (para. 1 of the Act of Parliament to prevent oppression and to protect freedom of assembly, No. 309 in the Collection of Laws and Decrees, 1921), an offence which is committed by anyone who maltreats another (or his family, his relations or any person under his protection) or causes him bodily harm or injures him in respect of his liberty, his honour, his property or his livelihood, or who threatens him with such injury, or who wilfully exploits difficulties immediately menacing him, or who takes advantage of his own position as official, teacher, clergyman or employer to desire wrongfully to enforce something upon that other, to make him do, or omit or suffer something. A strike or a lockout can be regarded as injury in this sense if it be directed against individual employees for nationality reasons."

National autonomy chiefly applied to the management of schools (maintained by the State) for national minorities, which were administered by elected councils. At the same time certain privileges were reserved for the Czechoslovaks, or rather for the Czechoslovak language. These were codified in the Language Law of 1920 which established Czechoslovak as the official State language of the Republic. It was thus the official language of all public offices, courts and other organs of the Republic ; it was the language of command in the army, the language in which laws were promulgated and binding, in which all business of the civil service was conducted, and which had an official name for every inhabited locality in the Republic. The Czechoslovak language also, as is proper, was taught as an obligatory subject in the schools of the other nationalities ; and finally it was the official language of Parliament (but subject to far-reaching concessions to minority languages, as described hereunder).

However, the linguistic rights of minorities were also expressly protected by law. For this purpose, Czechoslovakia was divided into two spheres : one, in which persons speaking a language other than Czechoslovak did not number 20 per cent. of the entire population ;

the other, those districts in which the language of more than 20 per cent. of the entire population was other than Czechoslovak.

In the first class of territory, Czechoslovak was the exclusive language used on public occasions. Matters arising in such districts were dealt with in Czechoslovak exclusively, regardless of the nationality of the parties concerned. But this did not present great practical difficulties, since small linguistic minorities usually acquire the majority language ; and where such was not the case, the services of interpreters were available in the same way as a person who cannot speak English is protected before the British courts. If a party appeared in a Czechoslovak court unable to speak the State language and unrepresented by a legal adviser, the court naturally made the necessary concessions on general principles of equity and as a matter of fairness.

In the second kind of area, the so-called minority districts, certain rights were guaranteed to the minority language side by side with the State language. The following conditions applied : the matter to be dealt with must have its origin in that area, and at least one of the parties must be a member of the nationality employing the minority language.

In such cases all the proceedings in the courts and public offices took place in the minority language, and although the use of the State language was never excluded, cases were heard and verdicts were rendered in the minority language. This possibility applied through all the rungs of the legal hierarchy, from the lowest to the highest courts. We see that in effect a member of a national minority in a minority area had the choice between using his own language, and the State language.

In Parliament, standing orders allowed Czechoslovak citizens of German, Ruthenian, Hungarian or Polish nationality to make their speeches in their own language, to take the oath and present motions and interpellations in it. The same provision was introduced into the proceedings of provincial and district diets and councils, and other local government bodies. In later years minority languages were also employed by military superiors when dealing with subordinates incapable of speaking the State language. The official Gazette and the official Collection of Laws and Decrees appeared also in minority languages, although only the Czechoslovak text was authentic.

As regards schooling, the minorities had important privileges. The State actually maintained with the help of considerable subventions most minority schools. It can be said that in this respect no other nation has dealt so liberally with the educational system of its minorities. There were no minority schools in Nazi Germany, nor in equally Nazified Hungary ; yet in Czechoslovakia all the minorities possessed a well-developed system of elementary and higher schools, often in

excess of their numerical proportions. Thus the Germans had no fewer than 4,428 elementary schools (figures for 1936), 83 secondary and public schools, one university and two technical colleges. In addition, they possessed 182 special schools, giving instruction in agriculture, commercial and vocational training, musical and pedagogic instruction, nursing, etc.

The Hungarian minority had 854 elementary schools, seven secondary schools, and a number of other institutions.

One hundred and sixty-eight elementary schools catered for Polish children, in addition to one secondary, three special, and 19 adult education schools.

The attached table shows what Czechoslovakia did for her minorities in the field of education alone. All these minority schools and numerous other institutions, such as theatres, libraries and other cultural enterprises, were financed by the State. It would be interesting to compare this generous attitude towards minorities with the treatment meted out by the neighbouring countries to their Czechoslovak minorities. The Czechoslovak minority in Germany had no schools whatsoever.

But schools are important only by reason of what is taught in them. Czechoslovakia was extremely generous in respect of German schooling, there were fewer children to a class in German schools than in the corresponding Czech schools, that is, the Germans also had more teachers in proportion to scholars than the Czechs. But what German teachers taught and German children learnt in these schools that were subventioned by a democratic State was eventually the rabble-rousing frenzy of German Nazism.

It is interesting to note the several stages in the development of Czecho-German relations. In 1919 all the German parties bitterly opposed the very formation and existence of the Czechoslovak State. The radical political groups among the German minority established contact with nationalist circles in Austria and Germany, and particularly with irredentist societies, such as the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (League for Germanity Abroad), which under the guise of cultural activities promoted Germany's reactionary demands for the incorporation of all German populations within the Reich. It is to be noted that the Sudeten-German Social Democrats, although refusing co-operation with the extreme German nationalists, formulated a programme that was hardly less chauvinistic in its claims for secession than that of the other parties.

The forerunners of the German Nazis, the *Deutschnationale* (Lodgeman-group) formed a "Combat Front" against collaboration with the Czechs. Other German groups, however, acquired a more realistic outlook and came to believe in co-operation. They were

NUMBER AND PROPORTIONS OF STATE-SUPPORTED SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO NATIONALITIES
(from Statistical Year Book CSR 1938)

	Of all School- children	Primary		Grammar		Industrial Commercial Agricultural		Teacher training		Secondary	
		Schools	per cent.	Schools	per cent.	Schools	per cent.	Schools	per cent.	Schools	per cent.
Czechoslovak	66.7	10,409	68.2	1,469	74.4	441	68.5	46	73.0	209	71.5
German	20.0	3,281	21.5	446	22.1	168	26.1	10	15.8	73	25.0
Hungarian	5.4	806	5.3	12	0.6	5	0.8	2	3.2	5	1.7
Ruthenian	5.2	545	3.6	15	0.8	7	1.0	4	6.4	4	1.4
Polish	0.7	90	0.6	11	0.5	3	0.5	1	1.6	1	0.4
Jewish	1.5	7	0.04	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rumanian		3	0.02	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mixed		116	0.74	20	1.6	19	3.1	—	—	—	—
Totals		15,257	100.0	1,973	100.0	643	100.0	63	100.0	292	100.0

the so-called "Activists," comprising the German Social Democrats, the Agrarians and finally the "Christlich-Sozialen." After over eight years of abstention, German Ministers for the first time entered the Czechoslovak Government in 1926. It is no accident that the Agrarians, representing farmers and peasants, were the first to recognise that the interests of the German minority lay on the home soil, and that, since the facts of geography and history compelled them to share good and bad with their Czech neighbours, mutual understanding and co-operation was imperative. Participation of German Ministers in the Government looked promising, especially when in 1929 Czech and German Social Democrats for the first time were together in the Government. The leader of the German Social Democrats—his name, curiously enough, was Dr. Czech—became a minister. At that time it seemed that the racial tension created by the agitation of the German irreconcilables was greatly eased. Dr. Franz Spina, a German university professor who represented the German Agrarians in the Cabinet, wrote at the end of 1928 :

"That this path has been successful there can be no dispute. It represents progress as against the stagnant conditions that obtained in the German camp from the year 1920 onwards. To expect, of course, great fundamental changes in favour of the German element would signify ignorance of the difficulties involved. First a path had to be opened up for mutual recognition and understanding, and for psychological accommodation of one to the other. This was achieved. In the two years of our collaboration in the Government, a complete change of atmosphere has been brought about in the political and national life of the two peoples. In the first place much evil has been frustrated by participation of the Germans in the Government. Things which were regarded as impossible only two years ago are now looked upon as quite natural. I would point out that last year a real *rapprochement* was achieved between the Czech and the German Social Democrats, and that only a few weeks ago the German Federation of Industries amalgamated with the analogous Czech organisation. These are symptoms of real practical progress, in the economic sphere to start with, which will prove a basis for a later programmatic settlement of the nationality programme."

But this promising development was cut short by the rapid growth, in Germany, of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist movement. After years of stagnation, when the Nazi party was only one among many crank and splinter groups, the violent upheaval caused by the rapid changeover from a boom to a depression period created favourable conditions for extremists. We shall not endeavour to examine whether these trade cycles are inevitable, or whether they are man-made and avoidable. At any rate, the year 1929 marks both the peak and the end of prosperity in Germany as well as in Czechoslovakia.

There was and is nothing new in Nazi ideology. It is a rehash and faithful continuation of earlier periods of German policy. As regards German minorities abroad, the Nazis propagated an innocent-sounding but very dangerous doctrine : the idea of the unity of the whole German nation wherever it may live. The very programme of the National Socialist movement speaks of "the unification of all Germans in a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination of the nations," and if the statesmen of Europe had taken the trouble of reading *Mein Kampf* they would have found the formula that "the German Reich must, as a State, include all Germans." This thesis was expounded in innumerable speeches and books ; yet the statesmen of the world did not bother to reflect that this unopposed claim meant, for instance, the inclusion in the Greater Reich of even large tracts of South America and, in fact, the annexation of all territories in which German populations are to be found.

Bismarck, in a moment of self-revelation, made the almost untranslatable admission : "*Der Deutsche muss seine Schweinereien immer weltanschaulich fundieren.*" (The German must always give a philosophical foundation to his outrages.) Consequently this brutal and unashamed imperialism (which nobody bothered to notice just because it was proclaimed so openly) was cloaked with the mystical mantle of the "Community of Race," the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This is composed of both culture and race and transcends all national boundaries. Wherever a German dwells, whatever nationality he has adopted, his first duty remains to Germany. Not citizenship, but "community of blood" and language constituted that "*Volks-gemeinschaft*"; and the movement openly aimed at uniting all Germans not only in racial affinity but in political fact.

To attain this aim, work among German minorities was intensified long before Hitler actually assumed power. What could appear more innocent than the desire of a German community to cultivate its language and cultural activities ? But the content and direction given to these cultural activities succeeded in seducing those minorities from their duty towards the State. The Sudeten Germans thus, like other German minorities, introduced the totalitarian principles of leadership, rejection of democratic ideals and methods, terrorism against non-Nazis and, in general, the total adoption of German National Socialist ideology. The advent to power of Nazism in Germany thus resulted in a sharp radicalisation of German minorities abroad. Backed by a mighty State whose rearmament was proceeding unopposed, the Sudeten Germans soon formulated demands which they deliberately made unacceptable. For their real aim was not satisfaction, but the complete destruction of Czechoslovakia.

It is a tragic fact that very few people abroad understood the essential nature of Nazi ideology. Nazi-subsidized agitators came to Western Europe and, in appealing to the Democracies' sense of fairness, submitted their grievances with a show of honest indignation. Konrad Henlein, a former gymnastics instructor, pleading with sweet reasonableness, found many willing listeners in British political and parliamentary circles. At the same time Germany set in motion a whole army of such agitators, even non-Germans. Hungarian aristocrats became a prominent feature in certain West End salons; people discovered in them a touching affinity to "ourselves." After all, those aristocrats were members of the landed gentry, they loved horses, they were dressed by West End tailors, they had pleasant manners, and they were extremely persuasive.

Then there were shaggy wild men from Macedonia and Croatia who were also sponsored by certain circles—those who believed themselves progressive, and based their knowledge of conditions in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Macedonia on the tales of these emissaries. Political dilettantism thrived—perhaps excused by the ineptitude of the professionals—and all this propaganda, skilfully promoted by a certain press, resulted in the conviction that "there was something to be said for the German claims." And since our friends and allies were more pliable, more amenable to pressure, more dependent on our help and good will than our enemies, we fell in with the wishes of our enemies and advised our friends to give way.

Munich came as a bolt from the blue, not only to the Czechs, but also to all Europeans who had fervently believed that all this temporising on the part of the Democracies was hiding some deeper purpose, some firm resolve to stamp out aggression. But the roots of Munich go back to the time when the League of Nations, and with it the idea of collective security, was betrayed by the Great Powers . . .

CHAPTER SIX

GATHERING CLOUDS

IN 1933 the German Nazis in Czechoslovakia, heartened by the success of their friends in the Reich, came out into the open. They formed a German Nazi party whose trappings and methods were identical with those of Nazism in Germany proper. They had their storm troopers, they organised boycott and terror against Jews and Czechs, and matters rose to such a pitch that the Czechoslovak Government, in 1934, had to ban that party.

But this step did not produce quiet. The tempo of events in Europe accelerated. In Austria, the field guns of Dollfuss, Starhemberg and Fey smashed the Vienna workers' flats and thereby destroyed the foundations of Austrian independence; for they reduced the Austrian working classes, Austria's one defence against Fascism, to sullen apathy. Hitler understood the significance of those events and five months later staged his first coup which, though abortive, cost Dollfuss his life and showed to those willing to read the portents that Austria was doomed.

At that time active Czechoslovak support for Austrian independence, if backed by the democratic powers, might have turned the scales. But the Powers had already embarked on their policy of appeasement, and thus Dr. Beneš's policy towards Austria, aiming at preventing the *Anschluss*, and a Habsburg restoration, could not count on their support. So the clerical Fascists who now wielded their brittle, yet brutal, power in Austria had to rely on Mussolini's support; the Western Powers showed themselves not interested in the sphere which Hitler, without encountering contradiction, proclaimed Germany's exclusive concern. The growing threat to Czechoslovakia was already discernible; but here, as so often, the key to the situation lay in London and Paris, and not in Prague.

In 1935, aged President-Liberator Masaryk retired from office, and his recommendation resulted in Dr. Beneš's elevation to the dignity of President. Reactionary, semi-Fascist elements opposed this step, but the mantle of the President-Liberator descended on the shoulders of his disciple and comrade of the first hour and silenced the critics.

In several ways Edvard Beneš was typical of his countrymen, and of the new trend in Czechoslovak history. Masaryk, the great old man, had embodied the heroic epoch of the Czechoslovak struggle for liberty. As a thinker and statesman, he was a figure of uncontested grandeur. Like Moses, he had laid down the principles that were to guide the State when it was established. And now Edvard Beneš,

one-time leader of the Mafia, conspirator, organiser of patriotic sabotage and espionage, had the task of translating those principles into the everyday reality of power politics.

The Czechs have been described as a nation of "little men," of all Slav races perhaps closest to the pre-Nazi German in their sober realism and efficient thoroughness. The Czech is not easily captivated by grandiose slogans and sweeping idealism: he brings an eminently business-like approach to all questions confronting him. This is why he has produced successful leaders of commercial and industrial enterprise, like the world-famous Bata. The Czech is no romantic gambler: his aim is security. When he is not a peasant, secure in the possession of his soil, he seeks this security in the Civil Service and other Government employment. In 1930, 720,000 people were employed in the public services—141,000 of them Germans, thus almost corresponding to the percentage of the German minority.*

The President himself sprang from peasant stock. Born at Kozlany in Bohemia on May 28, 1884, he was the youngest of a smallholder's ten children. After passing through the elementary school of his village he became in 1896 a pupil at the *Gymnasium* (grammar school) in Prague-Vinohrady. He showed special aptitude for French and Athletics: while still a schoolboy he translated Emile Zola's *L'Assommoir* into Czech, and he is also probably the only statesman to have played for his country in international football (soccer). At the age of twenty he became a student at the philosophical faculty of the Prague University, and gave early promise of his aptitude for logics and psychology, the armaments of the future sociologist. It was thus in 1904 that he first met and came under the decisive influence of Professor Masaryk. It was Masaryk who enlisted young Beneš in the struggle for national freedom. One year later, acting on Masaryk's advice, Beneš left for Paris where he pursued his studies, living on a stipend of the *Alliance Française*, supplemented by translation work and correspondence for home newspapers. In 1906 he spent four months in London, in order to learn English, which he now speaks with considerable fluency. The year 1907 was spent at the High School of Political Science and Law at Dijon, and for the next year Edvard Beneš pursued his studies in Berlin. In 1908 he obtained his degrees as Bachelor of Law and Doctor of Philosophy at the Paris Sorbonne and Dijon University respectively.

In the same year there appeared in Paris his first publication, a study entitled, characteristically enough, *The Austrian Problem and*

* If the Germans still had grievances, alleging insufficient representation, Dr. Beneš gave the reasons when he said: "In the first place there is the question of confidence. It is understandable that a democratic State does not wish to entrust its administration to officials who profess Fascist, totalitarian or . . . principles . . . That applies in all directions, equally for Czechoslovaks as for Germans."

the Czech Question. This dissertation gave already proof of the author's intimate knowledge of Austrian nationality problems, and was a forerunner to his later work on the same subject.

In 1908 Beneš also finished his philosophical studies at Prague University and gained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In September, 1909, he was appointed Professor at the Czech Commercial Academy in Prague. About the same time he married Miss Hana Vlčková whom he had met in Paris.

Beside his teaching at the Commercial Academy his main interest was sociology, then quite a new academic discipline, for which he obtained a degree in 1912, becoming a lecturer on the subject at Prague University in 1913. Dr. Beneš's gifts soon gained him prominence as collaborator of many learned reviews at home and abroad. At the same time he did not neglect his journalistic activities, nor his keen interest in politics. He joined Masaryk's party, the former "Czech Progressives," whose name was later changed into "Realists."

When war broke out in 1914, Beneš cast in his lot with the cause of revolution against Austria. In September, 1914, he joined the editorial staff of *Cas (Times)*, Masaryk's paper. We have already seen how he took charge of the revolutionary underground movement, how he had to flee abroad in 1915, and how he created the Czech National Council in Paris, whose president was Masaryk and whose general secretary was Beneš.

During that time Beneš earned his living as a lecturer on Czech language and history at the Paris *Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes*. In the National Council's organ *La Nation Tchèque* he wrote under the pseudonym of "E. Bělský." In 1916 finally, there appeared his book *Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie* which did a great deal to harden Allied opinion against Austria and the Habsburgs.

We know of Dr. Beneš's subsequent activities during the war, how he successfully worked for the formation of an independent Czechoslovak army and for the recognition of the National Council as the provisional Czechoslovak Government.

At the Peace Conference Dr. Beneš represented his country with conspicuous success, and became, as it were, the trustee of French security in Central Europe, where Czechoslovakia was to form the cornerstone in the French system of alliances.

When Dr. Beneš became President, his sincere endeavour to act on Masaryk's principles was eventually recognised and respected by all political parties, including his former enemies. The Foreign Office post which Dr. Beneš had vacated was filled by his able and devoted friend, Dr. Kamil Krofta, former Ambassador to Vienna, Berlin and the Holy See.

At that time already the international position of Czechoslovakia, was far from satisfactory. Colonel Beck's Government in Poland never very amicably disposed towards Czechoslovakia, had concluded the 1934 non-aggression Pact with Germany, which Hitler used to camouflage his designs against Austria, Czechoslovakia and, in the end, Poland herself. The ambiguous role of Polish diplomacy in the years 1933 to 1938 has not been fully elucidated. Mr. Wickham Steed, basing himself on good authority, alleges that secret clauses were attached to the Polish-German Pact. "Two of those secret conditions engaged Poland to be neutral in the event of a German annexation of Austria," writes Wickham Steed, "and not to enter into an agreement of any kind with the Little Entente as such or with Czechoslovakia in particular."

It is also widely believed that certain sections of the Polish landed gentry planned a joint campaign with Germany against the Soviet Union. However that may have been—and the Polish Government-in-exile naturally denies this Russian allegation—it cannot be denied that Poland's benevolent neutrality towards Germany proved her own undoing: for instead of supporting Czechoslovakia even at the price of foregoing the Těšín frontier rectification, Poland allowed itself to be outflanked and encircled.

It was Poland's passivity, too, which largely facilitated the German annexation of Austria. At the present moment it is the fashion to speak of the "rape" of Austria: the fact of the matter is that in the past almost all Austrian parties, including the Socialists, with the sole exception of the Habsburg legitimists, had favoured the *Anschluss*. When the Germans marched into Austria they were fervently welcomed by one part of the population, while the recently defeated Left looked on with sullen indifference.

Czechoslovakia was thereby completely enveloped by actually or potentially hostile powers. Yet President Beneš continued to put his trust in the good sense of the Western Democracies, and in the quiet confidence and patriotism of his nation. "Czechoslovakia shall not become another Austria," was the slogan of the hour. Meanwhile everything that could be done to ensure a state of military preparedness without giving provocation, was carried out. The Prime Minister, Dr. Milan Hodža, expressed the Czechoslovak people's confidence in the future. In a broadcast on March 23, 1938, a few days after the *Anschluss*, he said:

"Czechoslovakia has the mission of organising agreement and collaboration among the nations on this delicate spot in Europe. This mission is to-day for us and for Central Europe, indeed for the whole of Europe and her peace, a vital interest. We shall faithfully

fulfil this mission, we shall lead our State on with strong sense of inner certainty and in the consciousness of safe development."

* * *

At that time, however, Czechoslovakia was already seriously weakened by the enemy within her gates: the Sudeten Germans, under the cunning leadership of Hitler's secret viceroy, Konrad Henlein. While the German ministers representing the activists were still members of the Cabinet, they had already lost all popular support. The 1935 parliamentary elections had resulted in a veritable landslide; Henlein's camouflaged Nazi Party had carried more than two-thirds of the German seats in Parliament. Out of a German population of three and a quarter million *souls*, Henlein polled over one and a quarter million *votes*—which is near enough to a totality of adult voters.

Let us pause a moment to consider this result of elections held under conditions of perfect democratic liberty in a democratic State. True, there may have been some intimidation, but the ballot was secret, and order was maintained during the poll. Will the pernicious advocates of the "Fourth Reich," who claim that the "decent Germans" were overwhelmed by the brute force of Nazi terrorism, maintain that the same thing happened to the Sudeten Germans? Or does not this phenomenon rather go to show that Nazism must be the ideology most adequate to the German soul, since millions of free Germans adopted it voluntarily and without the pressure of the Gestapo?

These elections terminated the period of Czech-German co-operation. From now on the Sudeten Germans reverted to their attitude as displayed before 1926: a complete negation of the Czechoslovak State's right to exist. However, Henlein had to disguise his aims in order to avoid another ban like the one imposed on the old Sudeten Nazis two years before. Consequently Henlein brazenly denied all connection with the Third Reich, and his stormtroopers—termed *Saalschutz* (meeting-hall stewards) donned innocently white shirts instead of brown ones. Like Hitler before him, he professed the utmost "loyalty" to the Republic. And some people in Czechoslovakia, and very many people abroad, were taken in.

Henlein went so far as to assert his belief in democracy, in the close connection of the Sudeten Germans with the Czechoslovak State, and to declare: "We consider the Czechoslovak people, whose destiny is inextricably bound up with ours in this country, to be the cultural equals of all the peoples of Central Europe." Yet all the time this man was receiving secret instructions and funds from Berlin—a classic instance of "Nordic Cunning" as praised by the Germans. Illegal propaganda matter was smuggled into Czechoslovakia in enormous quantities. Liaison officers with Berlin were Krebs and

Jung, two leaders of the Sudeten Nazis and members of the Czechoslovak Parliament who had fled to Germany in 1934 when their treacherous activities had been discovered. They subsequently became members of the German Reichstag, although technically still Czechoslovak citizens, and were Goebbels's chief advisers on Sudeten German questions.

Henlein went out of his way to stress his aversion to Pan-Germanic ideas which he declared were as destructive as Pan-Slavism. Henlein made this statement in a lecture at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, on December 9, 1935, where his seeming moderation made a good impression. It is useful to recall a summing-up of Henlein's answers to the questions put to him by the Chairman.

The Chairman said that the gist of Herr Henlein's remarks was: that he was not the local representative of Hitler; his Party was not a covert Nazi Party. He had never spoken to Herr Hitler, and he had never received any courier or representative from the German Government. He had never received officially any representative of the Nazi Party in Germany, *and he was not in touch with that Party . . .* His aim was to create a union between Czechoslovakia and the German minority, *and that aim was in no way levelled against Czechoslovakia . . .* His movement was in no sense dangerous to the Czechoslovak Republic. . . . He would like to point out that he had already given his oath to the State as an officer of the State, which he was . . . He had never spoken against the Jews, and there was no Aryan paragraph in the Articles of his Party . . . There was no solution of the questions at issue except by conciliation within Czechoslovakia itself; his Party in all circumstances wished to maintain the unity of the Czechoslovak Republic. . . The Sudeten Germans were not Nazis, and to say that they were National Socialists in the German sense was wrong."

Apart from the anti-Czechoslovak press, which gladly gave prominence to Henlein, not a few people were taken in by these protestations. That every single word was a deliberate, cunning lie has since been proved, not only by events, but by Henlein's own confession. Vain like all successful criminals, he could not forbear to boast of his duplicity and deceit.

In March, 1941, Konrad Henlein gave a lecture at the Verwaltungsakademie in Vienna on "The Sudeten Germans' Fight for Freedom." We give below a translation of the report of this lecture which appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on March 5:

"Gauleiter Henlein began by pointing out that the Ostmark and Sudetenland had long had a common history and were bound to one another by common sufferings and aspirations. It was in the Danube basin and the Sudeten lands that the first heralds of Greater Germany

had arisen, it was there that the Pan-German idea had first taken root, and after the war the common cry for Anschluss and a Greater Germany had sounded loud and clear. He recalled the events of March 4, 1919, the day on which the expression of allegiance to the Pan-German idea had caused the blood of over 100 defenceless men, women, and children to flow.

“ He then gave a brief historical survey to explain the roots of the question, touched upon the measures of self-help, especially in the cultural and economic sphere, by which the Germans of Sudetenland had tried to counteract the pressure of the Czechs since 1918, mentioning with appreciation the activity of the old NSDAP, which had done valuable work to prepare the way to set in motion the movement of the Sudeten Germans for political union, and came at last to the brutal methods of suppression by which the Czech authorities had tried in the autumn of 1933 to break the political will of the Sudeten Germans once for all.

“ The speaker went on to describe the responsible task allotted to him as leader of the national group in its struggle for its German birthright ; and pointed out that the only possibility before the Sudeten Germans was to carry on, *under a mask of complete legality*, their struggle for their self-preservation as Sudeten Germans and their return to the Reich. *In the course of a few years the Sudeten Germans had succeeded in endangering the inner stability of Czechoslovakia so fundamentally and causing such confusion in internal affairs that she was ripe for liquidation. All this was only possible because all the Sudeten Germans had become National Socialists.*

“ Konrad Henlein drew an unusually vivid picture of the way in which the German national question had become more and more acute, which had finally forced him to bring the Sudeten question and all its bearings before the forum of world public opinion. He recalled the part played by Lord Runciman, who was sent to Prague as mediator, though this mission had no other purpose than to gain time. Amid truly dramatic suspense Gauleiter Henlein re-enacted the moving events of those September days in 1938 which had finally led through blood and iron to the return to Adolf Hitler's Reich.

“ In spite of all that we Sudeten Germans did by our own efforts,” said Konrad Henlein in conclusion, “ we could never have achieved our aim without the intervention of the Führer. His idea inspired us, his strength bore us up, his Germany gave us faith in victory. May history one day pronounce her verdict : the Sudeten Germans have faithfully and willingly done their duty.”

The moral level of this cynical admission of contemptible falsehood speaks for itself.

* * *

At about the time of Dr. Beneš's election to the Presidency Henlein began to change his tactics. He now abandoned his democratic protestations and instead stressed the ties with the German "motherland." This was synchronised with a violent German press and wireless campaign against Czechoslovakia, the "home of Bolshevism," where the German minority was exposed to "brutal ill-treatment."

In 1936 Hitler repudiated the Locarno Pact and, unopposed, occupied the Rhineland. This meant the end of Henlein's "loyalty." His stormtroopers marched through the streets with all the paraphernalia of military pomp so beloved by the Germans. A campaign of active terrorism against the small minority courageous enough to oppose him began. There were the usual mass meetings with brass bands and flags and with streamers carrying the well-known slogans of the Nazi Party. In a sensational speech at Cheb (Eger), Henlein for the first time voiced his demand for a re-orientation of Czechoslovak foreign policy, meaning subordination to Hitler. It was in this speech that Henlein uttered the slogan: "I prefer to be hated with Germany rather than to profit from the hatred against Germany." At the same time Henlein's stormtroopers did their best to stir up incidents in order to create such hatred.

In the face of these happenings Dr. Beneš continued to carry out Masaryk's political testament who, on his resignation, had said that it was his successor's duty to secure "justice for all citizens, whatever nationality they may belong to." Pressure generates counter-pressure; yet in the face of countless German provocations Czech officials carried out an administrative policy which was characterised by patience and astonishing tranquillity.

That Dr. Beneš was conscious of the gravity of the situation is evidenced by his speech of April 16, 1938, in which he said:

"Will this process and development terminate in a vast new European or world war? All Europe is asking that question to-day. I am not blind to the seriousness of the situation, I do not want to calm you vainly and shortsightedly nor do I desire to diffuse official optimism. Every responsible statesman and politician to-day cannot but realise the gravity of the situation, and guide and prepare his State accordingly. We are doing all this. We try to do our duty to the full. And we are indeed prepared for whatever may come. But we are at the same time doing everything which might possibly contribute to the preservation of peace, in loyalty and deep devotion to our principles. We try not to contribute in any way to the international tension between the Powers. We seek sincerely and warmly desire genuine and permanent agreement with all our neighbours. On our side there is no objections or obstacles to such agreements.

We believe especially in an agreement between our State and Germany, in harmony with recent statements made by its responsible statesmen."

Now followed a period of discussions between Henlein and the Government, in which the Sudeten Führer raised his claims whenever Czech agreement was in sight. Thus, negotiations with Prime Minister Hodža in February, 1937, resulted in Czech acceptance of many German demands; whereupon Henlein charged the Government with deliberate obstruction and announced that he now demanded "absolute autonomy."

President Beneš replied to these charges and even then expressed his belief in a peaceful settlement with the German minority. Referring to legislative proposals that were to make far-reaching concessions to the Sudeten Germans, he said at the end of 1937:

"This only carries out what is prescribed in these matters in our Constitution, and supplements what our successive Governments have done in the matter since 1919. All that it is possible to say in this connection has already been said. I myself in the speech I made on October 24, and the Premier and other Cabinet Ministers in the course of the Budget debate, have dealt fully with the matter. To-day no one, as I hope, any longer doubts that the decisions are being carried out. They have been directed into the channels in which they will automatically run on until they have been carried out to the full. Everyone who thinks on sound political lines and knows the complicated nature of all political doings will understand that the carrying out of such matters demands time.

"In this connection," the President continued, "I have full confidence in our people to whatever nationality they may belong. They have a high political standard and good will, they desire order, collaboration and peaceful development, and they respect the fellow-citizen who speaks a different tongue, his opinions, his feelings and his tradition. From this my belief I exclude no one, whether in the ranks of the Government majority or of the Opposition, whether of the Left or of the Right."

The basis of much of Henlein's propaganda was the admitted economic crisis which had hit the Sudetenland very badly—but other parts of the country too. There was widespread unemployment and undoubted suffering. Henlein capitalised on these conditions by the idiotic assertion that the Czech authorities were deliberately keeping the Sudetenlands in a state of economic depression—a claim whose absurdity does not stand a moment's examination. It is obvious that the whole State is bound to suffer from economic disruption in one of its parts. Nobody will cut off his nose to spite his face.

But what were the reasons for this depression? Firstly between eighty and ninety-five per cent. of Czechoslovakia's hardest-hit

export industries, textiles and glass, were situated in the Sudeten areas. They suffered partly from the world crisis, and partly owing to causes originating already under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. And what, in turn, had provoked the world crisis? Not the least cause—some say, its main cause—had been Germany's default on her trade debts and her system of autarky based on her famous clearing agreements. Under these clearing agreements the debtor for the first time in history "squeezed" his creditors. Huge balances in marks accumulated, and the creditors were forced to accept payment in kind, aspirins, mouth-organs, and other commodities of doubtful value. In the case of South-Eastern Europe's agricultural States there was a market for German industrial products; but Czechoslovakia, herself an exporter and incidentally one of Europe's greatest armament producers, was in a different case.

One of Czechoslovakia's invisible exports was, as we have seen, the tourist traffic to the famous Bohemian spas. Germany, a vast prison like all totalitarian States, made it progressively impossible for her citizens to travel abroad by forbidding them to take out more than a few marks. So German tourists, apart from spies and agitators, were absent from Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad), Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) and all the other spas in the Sudetenland; while other foreign visitors found the military displays of the local Nazis and the general atmosphere of unrest created by them, detrimental to a successful cure. The number of foreign visitors to the Czechoslovak spas, over seventy of which were situated in German-speaking districts, dropped by 150,000 from one year to the next.

The economic crisis was reflected in a catastrophic contraction of Czechoslovakia's foreign trade. In 1928 exports alone had amounted to over twenty-one billion crowns. In 1935 exports had dropped to little over one-third of that figure, and exports and imports combined reached only two-thirds of that sum. If the German industrial areas suffered under this depression, so did the whole of the State, but it is certainly a fact that the ever-rising bill for social relief was spread evenly over the whole country, and the German unemployed received their fair share. The State paid a generous supplement in addition to the sums doled out in relief by the Trade Unions. The total of unemployment relief paid out in this manner had risen from twenty-four million crowns in 1928 to six hundred and seventy-two million in 1933, although unemployment was reduced during the subsequent years. In 1936, for instance, this sum had sunk to four hundred and twenty million crowns.

Henlein had his remedy for Czechoslovakia's economic crisis. It was, of course, Czechoslovakia's integration into German economy—that "Grossraumwirtschaft" which means, in effect, Germany's

successful exploitation of Europe as a German colony. With the money of her creditors, Germany had financed her Four Years' Plan; and Czechoslovakia had not been forgotten. Her industrial and agricultural wealth figured in the calculations of German economists, who remembered that the road to the Ukraine passes through Czechoslovakia. The wheat fields of Hungary, the oil wells of Rumania, were other milestones on the road whose first stage was Vienna, and the second, Prague.

For the political activities of Henlein inside Czechoslovakia the German language possesses a highly descriptive word: *Unterhöhlen*. Burrowing, tunnelling underground, Henlein undermined the foundations of the Czechoslovak Republic. For this purpose he allied himself with other destructive forces—the Slovak autonomists, the Hungarian and Polish minority leaders on whose hostility to the Republic he could rely. Berlin assured them through Henlein and his lieutenants that their claims would be met “when the Day came.” And Dr. Beneš's sincere desire to make the twentieth anniversary of the Republic coincide with an equitable solution for the problem of the nationalities which would be acceptable to all minorities was thwarted by the agents of Berlin, doing their best to increase the truculence and intransigence of these groups. And the democratic world looked on, while the forces of disruption and destruction were putting the finishing touches to their sinister work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GREAT BETRAYAL

THE twentieth year of Czechoslovak independence, 1938, was a year of destiny. President Beneš felt this when he issued his customary New Year Message at the end of 1937. His ardent sincerity and good will, and the high hopes so sadly to be disappointed, were expressed in these words :

“ This year the beautiful Christmas-time, the time of new awakening, a time of rebirth that calls all men of good will of all parties and all nationalities, from Left and from Right, to peace, to collaboration and to a profound belief in better days to come, usher in for us the Jubilee of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of our Republic.”

Turning to the burning political issues of the day, the President continued :

“ This year, too, I come to you with a message of peace, I regret what I have already said on more than one occasion ; the most dangerous post-war year was the year 1936. In that year, under the influence of the evolution of the balance of power among them, the European States diverged, voluntarily or compulsorily, from the policy they had hitherto pursued, a policy which had found its expression in the equilibrium represented by the League of Nations, and openly entered upon another period of direct rivalry and direct measuring of their forces. The year 1936 was thus a year of break with the past and of new acquisition of strength in the internal sphere by the authoritative States at the expense of the other Great Powers and States. The year 1937, however, in its turn, restored the balance of forces between these two camps. At the close of 1937 we see that Franco-British collaboration has again become more intensive, that there has been a closer approach to the United States of America, and that the tension between Germany and the Soviet Union is allayed.”

President Beneš, when he spoke these words, knew something that became public only many years afterwards. Hitler had been trying to get Czechoslovakia out of the French-Russian coalition, and to this end had sent negotiators to Prague. But Beneš had stood firm, refusing to be impressed by cajolery or threats. Thus, the following words in which he minimised the danger of war must be understood, not as blind over-confidence, but as a hint to Hitler—and the world—that Czechoslovakia was looking for safety in the framework of her alliance with the French-Russian coalition. President Beneš continued :

"The possibility of a European War is much smaller than it was in the earlier months and previous years. It is to be seen that the Great Powers—all of them without exception—when they take stock of and measure up one another's forces, have arrived at the conclusion that a war in Europe would produce a result equivalent to a catastrophe, and would mean no solution. When I see in the year 1936, a year of grave crisis, and in the year 1937 a year of balancing forces, it seems to me that the year of 1938 ought to be, and presumably will be, a year of negotiations, of discussions, of search for new mutual understanding, and finally of partial and temporary agreements—agreements which will then lead to more definite acts that will actually secure peace at least in Europe."

Dr. Beneš concluded his message to his people with these words:

"May everyone of us on this day which to the whole Christian world is a symbol of love, of peace, of good will, of joy, of hope and of rebirth, remember that the human happiness of the individual, of the classes and of the nation depends in the long run only upon tranquillity and peace of heart and mind, and that peace of heart and mind is only given to man when he is able always with charity and good will and in all circumstances to adopt a positive attitude to his fellow-men, whoever that may be, a positive attitude to his aspirations, sentiments and needs: when he is able to banish from his heart and mind all that is negative, all that is touched with hate, all that is destructive or passionate, whether in the political, social, economic or national sphere; when he is able to resolve to spend no day in hatred or anger, and when he knows that he ought not to let a single day pass on which, alongside his daily round, he does not do a deed that springs from good will and love not to a party, to a class or even to the nation but from all-embracing great and pure humanity. The present time has need of such people. It is only they who can overcome the present chaos of heart and soul, the present-day decline of the nations and the world."

It was on this noble plane of thought that President Beneš ushered in the year of fate, 1938.

* * *

Meanwhile Henlein's movement gathered fresh impetus from Hitler's annexation of Austria. Leaders and members of all German parties tried to make their peace with the Henleinists, to climb on the band waggon while there were still some vacant seats. The German Social Democrats lost most of their members, and so did the Christian Socialists, the Party of the Catholics. Had not Cardinal-Archbishop Innitzer of Vienna, himself of Sudeten German origin, welcomed the Germans and signed a pastoral letter with the magic formula *Heil Hitler*? There was no need for German Catholics in Czechoslovakia

to be more Catholic than an archbishop, they argued—and acted accordingly. In their speeches and messages the Henleinists no longer troubled to disguise their intention of renouncing the path of reforms through negotiations and of employing revolutionary means instead. Their demands now comprised, not only territorial autonomy (which, as Masaryk had predicted, must be fatal to the existence of the State), but also the establishment of full-dress National Socialism on the German pattern. There must be an end to the crying injustice forbidding them to build concentration camps and stage pogroms. Indeed, sites for concentration camps were already openly indicated, and a mass flight of Czechs, Jews, and a number of German progressives took place. Prague became full of “refugees.” The fate of Austria stood before the Czechs as a warning whose menacing thunder clouds were becoming more ominous with every week.

It was imperative to prevent a panic, or excesses on the part of extremists in the Czech camp. For this reason Dr. Beneš had to display in public a serene disbelief in the possibility of a German aggression which he could not possibly have felt at that juncture. True, he had a sublime belief in the justice of his cause, and perhaps—at that time—still confidence in the loyalty of Czechoslovakia’s allies. However, these allies were counselling “moderation”; the sheep must not provoke the wolf. For these reasons President Beneš refrained from a step urged by many of his political friends—certainly no chauvinists—namely, to take proceedings against Henlein and his henchmen. They had manifestly committed acts of treason and were openly boasting of their plottings against the security of the State. All Beneš could do was to reiterate Czechoslovakia’s resolve not to provoke Germany, coupled with a strong hint that German provocation must not go too far against a Czechoslovakia prepared for every eventuality. On April 16, 1938, he said:

“I believe in the possibility of understanding between us and Germany. We decline to join any kind of ideological front and, just as emphatically, we decline to be included in any fronts of this kind by anyone. But also we believe that peace can only be preserved if different régimes fully respect one another, and if no State directly or indirectly intervenes in the affairs of another State. I believe that the forces for peace in all the countries of Europe are much stronger than they appear to be. That is why even now I don’t believe that war is unavoidable. It is our holy duty to be ready for it, but at the same time to do our best to strengthen the common endeavour that such a conflict should not arise.”

It seems that this kind of appeal for mutual respect between different régimes was very much beside the point. Hitler’s “respect” for the democratic way of life had been openly and repeatedly demonstrated

in the frankest possible manner. Were the Democracies to show respect for a régime of bloody terror, a lapse from civilised behaviour to the law of tooth and claw ?

President Beneš knew, of course, the incompatibility of democratic and totalitarian régimes ; he was not trying to rebuff those who were trying to promote indivisible peace founded on concerted action, and not on passivity ; neither did he advocate the negative conception of peace which consists simply in the absence of organised resistance against force. But he kept receiving the strongest possible hints from the West, counselling restraint ; and he had to bear in mind that energetic action might not only give a pretext for aggression to Hitler, but also welcome food to the anti-Czechoslovak propaganda carried on in England by philo-Fascist circles and newspapers. Thus Dr. Beneš, instead of jailing or executing the self-proclaimed traitors, announced a general amnesty. Unfortunately, nothing was more certain to be interpreted as a sign of weakness than this measure. Many patriotic Czechs, unaware of the game of intrigues behind the scenes, felt consternation and frustration at this attitude. Others believed—and Czechoslovakia's well-wishers abroad fervently prayed—that President Beneš must have some unusually strong trump card up his sleeve. Few people realised that the patient, almost supine attitude of the Czechoslovak Government was due entirely to the attitude and intervention of the Western Powers.

The Germans, at any rate, have always considered leniency and fairness shown to them as a sign of weakness. On April 24, 1938, Henlein made a speech at Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) in which he finally unmasked his batteries. He proclaimed Eight Points, which became known as the Karlsbad Programme—minimum demands, as Henlein and his followers hastened to add.

These eight points, while containing much that might have been considered by the Government, culminated in some demands which were absolutely incompatible with the continued existence of a sovereign and democratic republic. Henlein demanded not only German autonomy in all fields of public life but also territorial autonomy, "damages" for all losses allegedly suffered by the Sudeten Germans since 1918, and unrestrained freedom for them to profess and practise German National Socialism. In addition he put forward a demand that had nothing whatever to do with Sudeten German grievances : Czechoslovakia was to renounce her alliances with France and Russia.

In Prague it was obvious that Hitler, who really stood behind these demands, did not intend them to be accepted. The Czechs remembered Austria's provocative ultimatum to Serbia in 1914, which also had been deliberately formulated so as to make acceptance *in toto* impossible for any self-respecting nation.

But now a new factor intervened. The quarrel had become a European issue of the first magnitude, and the French and British Governments set out to "localise the conflict."

Localise the conflict. Avoid a show-down between opposing ideologies, between Right and Wrong. That was the *ultima ratio* of European diplomacy.

During twenty years the world had had a chance of grasping the idea of collective security. For twenty years peoples and governments had ample opportunities to learn that aggression can no more be localised than can a spark in a powder barrel. And, in particular, the five years since Hitler had been in power might have demonstrated even to "realists" that a fire cannot be extinguished with straw.

But instead of seeing the issue as one between right and wrong, as one in which an aggressive nation of seventy million was threatening the peaceable existence of a people of ten million, France and Britain counselled "moderation"—to the Czechs. French and British statesmen were meeting in London and, faced with the possibility of an immediate invasion of Czechoslovakia, resolved to shrink from no sacrifice for the maintenance of peace—as long as the sacrifice was made by the Czechs.

While Henlein was forming a corps of stormtroopers who were provoking clashes with the Czech authorities, while arms were being brought over the frontier almost openly, while Germany was concentrating thirty divisions near the frontier, the French and British ministers in Prague urged the Czechoslovak Government to go to the limit of concession "in order to save world peace." Meanwhile Henlein flew to London, where he met many prominent politicians. A week later he visited Hitler in Berchtesgaden in order to receive his final instructions. All pretence of negotiation with the Prague Government was dropped, and the Henleinists declared openly that they would take their grievances to, and their orders from, Berlin.

The German press was full of invective against Beneš and the Czechs, and of reports of alleged Czech atrocities committed against a peaceful and defenceless German population. Every tavern brawl was magnified into a massacre; every time a Nazi schoolboy cheeked a Czech gendarme and was given a clip on the ear the German press reported streams of blood. What is surprising is the admirable restraint and discipline of Czech troops and gendarmes who, in the face of deliberate provocation, maintained their calm.

During these hectic weeks Prime Minister Hodža was working out a new Nationality Statute which went very far in meeting the German demands. The whole structure of the State was to be altered so as to give all minorities cultural autonomy and a share of the responsibility. On May 20, Dr. Beneš, still adhering to the principle of compromise,

made a speech at Tábor in which he exhorted both Czech and German radicals to moderation. He declared that the democratic principles and the integrity of the State must and would be maintained. His speech ended on a note of warning, caused by the news that the German army was beginning to move towards the frontier. Dr. Beneš said: "We are now living through the most serious times since the war. We must avoid all the mistakes of the past. That means we must not be afraid of the days to come and be ready to face all eventualities, good or bad."

The town of Tábor, where this speech was made, is closely connected with a heroic epoch of Czech history, the Hussite rising. The President was understood by those who heard him, and when partial mobilisation was decreed on the next day the Czechs joined the colours with enthusiasm. They welcomed the end—as they thought—to a period of uncertainty.

The Czechs, similar to the British, have never been militarists in the Prussian sense of the word. They love peace; but they are a very strong race of fighting virtue. Already Masaryk had said: "I love peace, but I also love the army"; and President Beneš had given special attention to the needs of the armed forces. Czechoslovakia's army was one and a half million strong; its equipment was equal to that of any other army, fortifications along the frontier were immensely powerful, and there was every chance that this army, *if supported by its allies*, would hold the German attack for a considerable time. The Czechs, not sharing the romantic notions of the Poles who thought that cavalry could stop tanks, had concentrated on mechanisation. The excellent quality of Czech tanks and Škoda-built heavy guns was later confirmed by the British when the Germans used these armaments against them.

There was, of course, a serious draw-back hampering this military potential. Not only were most of the industrial centres of Czechoslovakia, including the capital, within a few minutes' flying time of German airfields and therefore extremely vulnerable, but the army had to count on considerable defection on the part of the German element. An armed rising in the Sudetenland was not only a possibility but almost a certainty; and since the Sudeten frontier formed the only natural obstacle and there was no defensible line in the Bohemian plain, the position was tenable from a military point of view only if the Government had proclaimed a state of siege and taken energetic measures to forestall an insurrection.

There is no doubt that a drastic measure of this nature would have precipitated the German aggression; and it is easy to be wise after the event and say that this would have come about anyway. We may, in retrospect, be overestimating the military chances of Czechoslovakia.

In this war all Maginot lines have so far proved vulnerable, since modern warfare is again of the mobile kind. Static lines are no longer unassailable in a war that has become tri-dimensional.

But in the last essence everything turned on the question whether Czechoslovakia's friends and allies would honour their pledges—pledges given not only to Czechoslovakia but to the principles of freedom and security . . .

What were the actual obligations of the Great Powers toward Czechoslovakia? Britain had no direct treaty of alliance. It was understood that Britain, according to the careful formulations of Lord Halifax and Sir Neville Henderson, could not remain disinterested if France were involved in a European war.

France, on the other hand, had a treaty of alliance with Czechoslovakia and was under a clear obligation to come to her aid in the event of Czechoslovakia being attacked. Russia, too, was allied to Czechoslovakia, but Russia's military aid was contingent on France entering the war.

Thus, legally, everything hinged upon France. But, in fact, France's attitude was determined by that of Britain. And Britain's Prime Minister was Neville Chamberlain. . . .

Perhaps only the Germans knew how weak France had become during the past ten years. Militarily, France was led by a General Staff whose superannuated marshals and generals had learned nothing new and forgotten most of what they had known. France's population had decreased, and with it her industrial potential. In the heyday of German rearmament, when German factories were working in three shifts, France underwent the disastrous experiment of the Popular Front. Another high-minded "philosopher on the throne," Léon Blum, chose the worst possible moment to reduce working hours and to allow industrial unrest to weaken France. Once again Germany could profit from the regrettable but incontestable fact that Leftist, Pacifist, Socialist régimes abroad were involuntary allies of German militarism.

In this connection the fate of Spain should have been a warning to Dr. Beneš. A single French division would, in the early stages of the Fascist rising, have been sufficient to enable the Republican Government to triumph. But Léon Blum refused this help to his fellow Socialists and Republicans and he and his successors allowed Fascism to conquer Spain, just as they were to give Hitler a free hand against Czechoslovakia two years later.

The rot had eaten very deeply into the heart of France. This became evident when France failed to produce the rallying spirit which enabled Britain to rise after the catastrophe of Dunkirk. Behind the façade of the serried ranks of French infantry marching down the Champs

Elysées to the heroic strains of the Hymn of 1792, there was no power and no will to fight. There were too few tanks, few modern aeroplanes but, instead, exaggerated confidence in the uncompleted and over-publicised Maginot Line. The Germans were well aware of this state of things, for their agents were everywhere in French society like maggots in a cheese. Neither—to complete the comparison—was there absent the smell of scandals hastily suppressed, since many of the highest personages in the State were involved, but continuing as ferments of putrefaction below the surface.

Dr. Beneš, that ardent lover of French civilisation, must have watched the progressive decay of French morale and resources with sorrow and apprehension. Perhaps it was his information on this score that explains the great restraint in his attitude towards Germany and Henlein.

In the spring of 1938 it became known to the Czechoslovak Intelligence Service that ominous German troop movements were in progress. These troop movements were the subject of considerable diplomatic activities in the Chancelleries of Europe. Questioned by Sir Neville Henderson, Herr von Ribbentrop absolutely denied the reports of German troop movements and protested strongly against Czech provocation in resorting to partial mobilisation. Sir Neville Henderson, whose sincere endeavour to let Hitler have all he wanted is reflected in his book, *Failure of a Mission*, reported accordingly. Hitler had a conference with Ribbentrop and his military advisers, where it was decided to postpone direct action. It still seemed that Britain and France would fight.

In London Mr. Chamberlain declared that “the tension had eased.” This assurance was based on the Prague report that Henlein had resumed discussions with Dr. Hodža. Dr. Hodža assured Henlein of the Government’s desire to go to the limit of concession—with one exception: the Government could not accept secession, or the establishment of a National Socialist régime.

But three days later Henlein came out with his real aims. In an interview given to Mr. Ward Price, of the *Daily Mail*, he declared that the Prague Government had the choice only among three possibilities: acceptance of the full Karlsbad Programme—a plebiscite—“direct action” by Germany.

Now Dr. Beneš and the world knew where Henlein stood. If there had been a flight from the Sudetenland to Prague, a new wave of refugees now began to flee abroad. Czech and Jewish industrialists, business and professional men went abroad—to the extent permitted by a democratic world which closed, barred and bolted its doors against refugees. At the same time German press and radio propaganda was again intensified. Hitler knew perfectly well that neither Dr. Beneš

nor the Czechs were what he called "Bolshevists." But Hitler and Goebbels knew the effectiveness of the Bolshevik Bogey when displayed in the right quarters—such as certain fashionable salons in Mayfair and Passy, English country seats where Ribbentrop was a frequent guest, and among the "hard-faced businessmen" of many countries. So German propaganda spread stories of Red mobs massacring the German population. This tale of "Bolshevik persecution" culminated in a public speech by a recent guest on these shores, Herr Rudolf Hess, then the Führer's deputy, in which he declared that "the Prague Government was no longer in a position to guarantee peace and order within its borders."

This phrase which has from time immemorial been the pretext for imperialist intervention dispelled even Mr. Chamberlain's optimism. Dr. Beneš, too, sounded a warning note. Addressing the great Sokol festival, he said :

"We desire human and sensible co-operation with the various nationalities of the State. We desire to give them a proof of our respect of their national independence. We also desire to prove and to put into action our democratic equality and humanity. True, we demand the same from the other side."

The German answer to this appeal for fairness was not long in coming. A few days later Henlein announced his rejection of the Government's proposals.

Meanwhile a special German emissary came to London. He was Captain Fritz Wiedemann who came as it were as Hitler's personal envoy to Lord Halifax who received him for a private conversation. A few days later Chamberlain told the German Ambassador, von Dirksen, that the British Government was anxious to bring about "a peaceful solution" of the "Sudeten problem." It is doubtful whether this was the kind of language apt to impress Hitler.

Further conversations took place with French statesmen during the Royal visit to Paris—discussions from which the Czechoslovaks were carefully excluded. It is perhaps inopportune to disclose at the present juncture what was going on behind the scenes in the two months preceding Munich. Dr. Beneš' lips are sealed, and it will probably be only after the war that he will disclose what the democratic world has a right to know. At present he has refused very large offers from American publishers—one of which I myself submitted to him—to give his views and reveal the facts known to him on what must be regarded as a period of utter debasement in the sphere of secret diplomacy.

Despite pressing insistence, neither the Czechoslovaks nor the rest of the world were told what was the result of these discussions. However, it is not very difficult to guess ; for very soon the British

and French attitude towards Czechoslovakia hardened. The Czechoslovaks were accused of wishing to sabotage the just desires of the Germans by means of a *fait accompli* in the Czechoslovak Parliament. And then it was announced that the British Government had sent an observer in the person of Lord Runciman who was to report to the Prime Minister personally on the state of matters in Czechoslovakia. The principle of non-intervention in foreign affairs, so sedulously observed by Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters in the case of Spain, or when the Nazis were persecuting, torturing and murdering merely their own citizens and those of annexed Austria, was relaxed so as to facilitate Anglo-French interference in Czechoslovak affairs.

Lord Runciman arrived in Prague on August 3, accompanied by a staff of experts. His coming was welcomed with shouts of jubilation by the Henleinists, who acclaimed Runciman's mission as a resounding success of Wiedemann's negotiations. He had, said Henlein's official paper, *Die Zeit*, submitted to Lord Halifax a direct proposal from Hitler for the peaceful solution of the "Czechoslovak question" with the co-operation of Britain and France. It was thus no longer the Sudeten German question but the Czechoslovak question—that is, the very existence of Czechoslovakia was now in question. Hitler's "solution" for this kind of "question" was too familiar even then to leave the astute statesmen of France and Britain in any doubt as to what this meant.

Immediately on his arrival Lord Runciman was fêted by certain members of the Sudeten-German aristocracy. Long week-ends at Rothenhaus Castle, near Komotau, the palatial country seat of Prince Hohenlohe, were utilised to convince Lord Runciman of the justice of the German claims. At the same time the Henleinists did not, as some might have expected, try to impress Lord Runciman with the disciplined behaviour of their followers; on the contrary, they intensified their campaign of unrest, provoking clashes and rioting, so that Lord Runciman should see for himself the truth of Herr Hess's assertion that Czechoslovakia had become a scene of anarchy. Germany increased her troop concentrations, while Henlein rejected all suggestions of a compromise based on anything less than territorial autonomy, that is, secession. Under continued pressure the Prague Government finally submitted a fresh plan which, in the opinion of many Czech patriots, went already too far. It provided for the splitting up of the State into twenty-eight cantons with far-reaching autonomous rights. Eight of these cantons, comprising the German districts, were to be administered by Germans on the basis of complete autonomy.

After several meetings with Henlein, Lord Runciman took what is surely an extraordinary step. He advised Henlein to consult with

Hitler, and accordingly Henlein, on September 1, went to Berchtesgaden where he conferred with Hitler, Hess, Goering and Goebbels. Three days later Henlein announced that his master had rejected the Czechoslovak plan.

We must compare this course of events with conditions nearer home to realise the full enormity of what was being done to a friendly, democratic, sovereign State by its friends and allies. Let us assume a wildly improbable situation—that the descendants of Dutch settlers in the Holland district of Lincolnshire were clamouring for reunion with a mighty Dutch empire. A British government, eager to conciliate them, promises them autonomy, the use of the Dutch language, etc. But the militant Fascists of the Hague insist on annexation of large tracts of England. So, again for the sake of argument, France sends an observer who exerts increasing pressure on a terrified Whitehall and finally advises the Lincolnshire insurgents not to negotiate with London, but to get their instructions in the Hague. And all this in the name of world peace, which would be threatened by Britain's insistence on the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom.

Or, to imagine another instance, suppose that the Russian Government were to send observers to each by-election in Britain, with the right to interfere whenever they think that the interests of certain candidates are being jeopardised. Is it too much to assume that a procedure of this kind would be looked upon with disfavour by the British people? Yet this is precisely what was done to the Czechoslovaks in the name of Democracy and Peace.

Now came the last word of Dr. Beneš's Government, a proposal which divided Czechoslovakia into "Gaue," administrative districts in which all the minorities were to enjoy official recognition, complete language equality, control of the police and the civil service, and administration by officials of their respective nationality. The Prague Government had thus virtually accepted the Karlsbad Programme with the exception of two points: the establishment of a National Socialist dictatorship and the renunciation of the alliances with France and Russia.

Even Lord Runciman voiced satisfaction. He went so far as to describe the Government proposal as a suitable basis for negotiation.

But Hitler did not want agreement. On September 12, at the Nuremberg Party Rally, he screamed unimaginable abuse at Dr. Beneš personally who, for him, was the embodiment of the Versailles system and, without deigning to consider the Czech proposal, threatened immediate invasion.

Armed attacks against Czechoslovak frontier posts followed. The Government finally issued a warrant against Henlein. He and his

lieutenants fled to Germany and there raised a Sudeten Free Corps of 40,000 men, modelled on the notorious "Austrian Legion."

Now there ensued Mr. Chamberlain's famous flights to Berchtesgaden and Godesberg. While an armed rising of the Henleinists was actually in progress, Chamberlain and Hitler had a secret consultation. The French were informed of the decisions arrived at; the Czechoslovaks were not.

In Prague there prevailed a feeling of disciplined tension. A stringent censorship was imposed in order to comply with the wishes of Czechoslovakia's allies who frowned on expressions of Czech patriotism which might have been considered provocative by the Germans. Lord Runciman's findings had not been announced officially, but it became known that his week-end hosts had succeeded in convincing him that separation of the Sudetenland was unavoidable. Dr. Beneš and his Government were faced with a desperate situation. While the people, waiting in the streets in disciplined calm, were still expecting Czechoslovakia's allies to fulfil their obligations, President Beneš and his Cabinet knew the truth. France would not fight. Neither would England. As for Russian support, a hostile Poland separated them, and it was by no means certain that Czechoslovakia, should she receive aid from Russia, would not have to face her one-time Polish ally in addition to Germany.

The people had not yet been told that England and France had addressed to the Prague Government what was in effect an ultimatum, demanding the handing over to Germany of all districts with more than fifty per cent. German population. True, mutilated Czechoslovakia was to receive compensation—in the shape of a joint Franco-British guarantee of the rump State's frontiers. It was only on the evening of September 18 that the Prague papers informed the public that Czechoslovakia's allies had deserted her in the hour of her greatest crisis. On September 22 Chamberlain flew to Munich and went on to Berchtesgaden. His host had had other distinguished foreign visitors before the British Prime Minister: the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Hungary, who had already staked their claims; so had Poland. Chamberlain left Hitler after an inconclusive discussion lasting two hours. In London, the Cabinet were consulting with France's Prime Minister, Daladier, and the Foreign Minister, Bonnet. These discussions resulted in drastic demands—addressed to Czechoslovakia.

At two o'clock that night the British and French Ministers in Prague visited Dr. Beneš and presented a joint note which demanded Czechoslovakia's immediate and unconditional acceptance of the German claims. Under irresistible pressure the Cabinet accepted these demands.

The people in the streets of Prague were clamouring for arms. Not knowing the full extent of the great betrayal they demanded the right to fight. At the same time there were cries for General Syrový, the one-eyed leader of the Legionaries whose military reputation stood high. But the fate of Czechoslovakia was being sealed, not on the frontier where the Czechoslovak Government had largely succeeded in restoring order, but in Germany.

Again Chamberlain flew to Germany, this time to Godesberg, near Cologne, where Hitler told him: "European peace is what I am aiming at." At this meeting Hitler was urged to postpone actual hostilities, on the promise that his demands would be satisfied in full.

England had a rude awakening from centuries of insular seclusion. On Saturday, September 24, Chamberlain returned. The next day air raid precautions were begun, naval reservists called up, and slit trenches dug in St. James's Park.

In Prague, general mobilisation was ordered at last. It was greeted with a sigh of relief by the thousands who flocked to the colours, resolved to defend their country. This mobilisation, incidentally, was advised by the French and British representatives. Obviously, if the fiction of arbitration between two armed camps was to be maintained by Chamberlain and Bonnet it would never do to have Czechoslovakia in too peaceable a condition.

In a last pathetic belief in the values of a civilised order, the Prague Government appealed under the terms of the German-Czechoslovak Treaty of Locarno, confirmed by Goering himself only a few months before, according to which all differences between the two States were to be settled, in the first place, by diplomatic negotiation. But nobody took any notice of this appeal, least of all Hitler who, in a screaming diatribe on September 26, asserted his peaceful intentions and, concentrating the utmost personal abuse on Dr. Beneš, demanded the surrender of the Sudetenland by October 1.

Mr. Chamberlain's activities were warmly praised by Hitler, who said: "I assured him, and I repeat it here, that after the Czechoslovak problem has been settled, I have no more territorial claims in Europe." Mr. Chamberlain stated in reply that there was no necessity to go to war "over a question on which agreement has already been largely attained."

On September 29, 1938, there finally took place what is surely the greatest betrayal in history: the Munich Conference. Two dictators were assisted by the Prime Ministers of the two leading democracies of Europe in dismembering a civilised and democratic State, a fellow-member of the League of Nations. It was a "conference" from which the victim was expressly excluded.

What ensued is common knowledge. Czechoslovakia, faced with the threat of war by more than one of her neighbours, and deserted by the great democratic Powers in Europe, had to capitulate.

The Munich Dictate stands by itself. It is impossible to find a parallel to it in the annals of history. Yet there were things about it even worse than the murder of Czechoslovakia: the sickening hypocrisy and abominable smugness with which this crime was not only excused but even praised as an act of wisdom and as a service to the cause of peace. The complete perversion of values, engendered by years of propaganda and ostrich policies, finds no more striking illustration than the triumphant welcome offered to Chamberlain when he returned to London on September 30. He drove through the crowded streets like a conqueror and, from an upper window of No. 10, Downing Street, addressed the crowd as follows:

“My good friends, this is the second time in history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street Peace with Honour. I believe it is Peace for our Time.”

And at Heston Airport Chamberlain had waved a scrap of paper which, over the signatures of Hitler and himself, assured the world that the two countries would never go to war with one another again.

The jubilant admirers of the Munich Dictate have shrunk in numbers since then. So have those who agree with Mr. Chamberlain as to whether the fifth partner in the Munich Conference mentioned by him, Honour, really took part in the proceedings. It can of course be argued that considerations of honour, moral values, do not enter into the field of politics: that a State is bound only by its own naked self-interest. Advocates of such an attitude like to point out that Chamberlain “gained time” for Britain’s rearmament. This myth, still widely believed, is not based on facts. During the year that intervened till war broke out the disparity in armaments as between Germany and the Western Powers did not decrease but actually increased. And when we finally went to war we did so after having presented Hitler with one of the best equipped armies and the richest arsenal in Central Europe. “A far-away people of whom we know nothing,” in other words, we do not care a damn what happens beyond our frontiers—the White Cliffs of Dover, and not the Rhine, as postulated by Mr. Baldwin. We financed and facilitated German rearmament; the international solidarity of cartels and combines triumphed. All the fine speeches about collective security, the preservation of Democracy, were shown up as what they were.

But even this attitude is preferable to the repulsive hypocrisy which dares mention Honour and Peace in one breath with that deal—which tries to convince us, not that we were compelled to act as we did because we had no army, no air force and no armaments, but that

we were right in doing so. To make a virtue of necessity may be expedient : to make a virtue of vice is—vicious.

Later, sin was in part redeemed by suffering and heroism. Munich was expiated by Dunkirk. But full atonement will only have been made when Munich will be synonymous with black dishonour.

The consequences of this act have profoundly affected the outlook of a whole generation. All preconceived ideas on Democracy had to be revised. Humanity awoke from the dream of liberalism and progress ; hitherto it had been taken as a matter of course that right would triumph over might—that the rescuers would arrive in reel five of the film in time for the happy ending. The novel situation in which the predestined rescuers let the victim down had to be mentally digested. In short, people were confronted once more with the age-old question, the cry unanswered through the ages : Why do the wicked prosper ? Perhaps this descent to fundamentals will lead to a regeneration of our democratic concepts. From Munich the world will learn that Democracy must be defended and fought for, but must never be taken for granted. Munich has taught us that distrust of rulers and politicians must be the watchword of Democracy. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.

Of the many evaluations of Munich we shall quote one, contained in a speech made in the United States' Congress by Mr. William H. King, of Utah. In this speech, made on April 13, 1939, thus at a date when the Munich deal had already found its expected and logical conclusion in the complete annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, the Senator did not mince his words. He said :

“ The British and the French, too, are now appealing to American public sentiment with the claims that they are Democracies, and entitled at least to our moral support. That was the burden of Mr. Anthony Eden's speech some time ago in New York. Just how democratic these countries have always been would be an interesting subject of discussion, but time forbids. Form is not all, and the spirit counts for much more. However, just what was democratic in the procedure at Munich ? Four men met, without even the consent of the parliaments of the two who must deal with parliaments, and surrendered a sturdy Democracy without even giving that Democracy a hearing. When the Czechoslovak Minister at Munich sought to discuss the decision delivered to him, he was curtly told that no discussion would be permitted, and that the decision was made. By whom ? By Messrs. Hitler and Mussolini, who well knew in advance that the British and French were ready to surrender something that was not theirs, or were unwilling to protect Czechoslovakia against the wicked plan of the Nazi régime.

"This is an interesting question, political and ethical: even if we assume that France and Great Britain were not ready to fight, just what right, in order to protect their claimed Democracy, did they have to throw to the wolves another Democracy? That is a question Mr. Eden did not answer, and that is a question which may plague the British for centuries to come.

"It will not entirely meet the question to say that the Democracies were unprepared to fight. The French General Staff said the Army was ready, and Germany could be defeated, even though the struggle would be severe. That is now admitted. But if the Democracies were not ready, why were they not ready? That, again, is simply another illustration of the lack of foresight and statesmanship.

"England is to-day governed by a Prime Minister, claimed by some to be parochial in his views, though we must assume, as we should, that he is sincere. Mr. Chamberlain, on the eve of Munich, in a broadcast, said that it is a dreadful thing that England 'must build trenches and prepare gas masks because of a quarrel with a people in a far-away country of which we know nothing.' For a statesman, leading an Empire over which the sun never sets, that is an exhibition of parochialism which is difficult to understand. This is not a quarrel somewhere in Africa, but in the centre of Europe: and it was not an ordinary boundary dispute, but a question of German expansion and German hegemony, which touches Great Britain very closely, and concerns the whole world. . . . I can assure Mr. Chamberlain that we in America did not consider Czechoslovakia an unknown country, even though we are much farther away from it than he is. . . .

"Were I a Britisher, or a Frenchman, I should be very much concerned about the loss of faith of the rest of the world in their Governments. May there not be a feeling that they cannot be trusted?"

Dealing with the assertion frequently heard that "Czechoslovakia should have fought," which is tied up with another statement, namely, that the complete annexation of Bohemia and Moravia was not envisaged or countenanced by the Democracies, Senator King, echoing American public opinion, had this to say:

"It is unfortunate that both London and Paris may be charged as being accessories both before and after the fact in one of the crimes of the century, the destruction of a great Democracy. There is enough evidence to show that what was contemplated must have been known to both the Paris and London Governments, and when now Lord Halifax says that what occurred within the last few days was not contemplated at Munich he is either disingenuous or is giving an exhibition of appalling inertness, for what has happened in the last few days is a logical development of Munich. Once the Bohemian

mountains fell into the hands of Hitler there was nothing to stop his seizure of the remnants of the Czechoslovakian Republic.

"Certain French circles now try to soothe their conscience with claiming that the Czechs should have fought, even if alone. I can say with much assurance that the Czechs would have fought, whatever the cost, had they had only Germany to face. But they would have been attacked on their flank by the Poles and the Magyars. To fight under those circumstances would have been criminal folly, not heroism.

"But after Munich, in connection with Munich, they were assured that their truncated State would be guaranteed. Whatever the legal sophistries now indulged in by the British and French, morally those countries were obligated to protect a country which was the victim of their inertness or somnambulistic condition or lack of preparation. But now they are confessing, however, that they relied too much upon the assurances of Mussolini and Hitler, and were deceived by the promises which those men made to the French and English Governments. The Czechs, following the Munich appeasement, could not wage a war, especially when Hitler threatened the last President that, unless he yielded immediately, Prague would be bombed."

A great number of Czechs and Slovaks are living in the United States, and if Dr. Beneš's voice was not permitted to be raised in London, his compatriots in America were under no such restrictions. The above quotation from Senator King's speech shows the infinite harm done to Britain's prestige by Munich.

And here is a voice from Britain. Mr. Rennie Smith wrote in the *Central European Observer* (October 29, 1943):

"We encouraged Hitler to take Austria. We bullied Czechoslovakia—France and Britain, that is, while the U.S.A. looked on supinely—into the German enslavement. 'Peace in our time' was the justification. The Prime Minister of Britain, who justified these things to us, told us, in the same breath, that Czechoslovakia was an unknown country. The free and independent Republic of Czechoslovakia which never ceased to believe in the democratic West and in the U.S.A., which remained loyal to France to the end, and which was ever scrupulous in attendance and loyalty to Geneva, passed from one crisis to another. Boundless hopes became bitter dupes. The unbelievable came to pass. By the overwhelming pressure of her allies and friends, and in the name of a peace which was the last illusion of blindness and weakness, Czechoslovakia became a Gau of Germany.

"Do you remember what the people of Czechoslovakia were like in their darkest hour of forsakenness? I was privileged to see, early in October, 1938, a letter which had been sent by a Czech woman

to Dame Elizabeth Cadbury. This is the text of it. It shows the Czech people in all their anguish and bitterness :

‘ I am writing to you to say goodbye . . . I was happy to have been able to work with you and the other women of all nationalities in the understanding of the nations. I can do no more . . . I have been innocent enough to take seriously all such fine words as justice, liberty, collective security and arbitration, and I have sworn to peaceful ideology. To-day, when seeing my nation sacrificed, I have come to the conclusion that this was the motive employed by the Powers of our world to enfeeble the weak and make them a more certain prey.

‘ Those who have done this have assured only one thing: the reign of the most brutal force on earth. If people understand by international arbitration the kind which has been practised at Munich, then I prefer that international disputes be settled by war . . .

‘ We were—alas, we were—the most sane, the most just and the best regulated State in Europe. Perhaps the treatment of our Jewish minority, which has no other protective stronghold and which has lived happily here, proves that we were just ? We have lived at peace with the Germans—the frontiers have existed before the formation of the English nation, and the country which has been taken from us is the cradle of our family . . .

‘ You have mortally wounded the heart of Europe—the whole of Europe will suffer for it.’ ”

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE "PROTECTORS"

IN the days preceding Munich the Government had resigned, and General Syrový had been entrusted with the premiership. But his tenure of office was short-lived, and when, on October 1, 1938, the German Army occupied the Sudetenland, it was realised that Democracy in Czechoslovakia had ended.

Only a year before, on September 21, 1937, Eduard Beneš had spoken these words at the coffin of President-Liberator Masaryk: "President-Liberator, we will remain faithful to the heritage that you have placed in our hands." These words, *Věrní zůstaneme*, were to become the watchword of Beneš's second fight for freedom. For, realising that the fate of Schuschnigg awaited him, he decided to go abroad, to resume again where he had left off twenty-four years before: once more a proscribed exile, working for the national resurrection of his people, sustained only by the unshakable conviction that truth must prevail. So he resigned his office on October 5, 1938, addressing the following words of farewell to his people:

"I myself acted according to what I believed to be my duty, and in the interest of our State, the whole nation, and our position in Europe. We wanted peace with all our neighbours, but there was a refusal to recognise our good will and in the end everybody turned against us. The forces which were opposed to our good will were stronger than we. I feel it is for the best that the new European constellation which is arising should not be disturbed by ourselves.

"I remain a convinced democrat, and therefore I think the best thing I can do is to leave the field . . .

"I close my words of farewell in the conviction that the strength of our nation, its ideals of freedom for which it has so often fought in the past and in the name of which it has so often been victorious, will yet carry it through to happier days. I am not leaving the ship in the midst of the storm, but I believe it is a political necessity that I should go."

His resignation was an act committed under duress. Six years later, in 1944, the Czechoslovak Government in London made known that Hitler himself had exerted pressure on Dr. Beneš to leave the country. And this can be read, too, in the words of Dr. Beneš's farewell message to Prime Minister Syrový, where he stated that his resignation was motivated by apprehension "lest his person should prove a hindrance in the future development to which the State must accommodate itself."

Significantly, Dr. Beneš remained in the country for several weeks following his resignation, choosing from among the various political parties his collaborators for the campaign of liberation he intended to commence. He left only on October 22, accompanied by Madame Beneš.

Dr. Beneš had received an invitation from the University of Chicago, at which T. G. Masaryk had lectured in 1901 and 1903, to deliver a course of lectures on democratic institutions. President and Mme. Beneš were permitted to come to London where they stayed for three weeks before proceeding to America.

On the day of Dr. Beneš's resignation the Government was reconstructed, Dr. František Chvalkovský succeeded Professor Krofta as Foreign Minister, while Dr. Emil Hácha became President.

The mood of the Czech people can be imagined. The national catastrophe caused a terrible disillusionment. All but one of the political parties were banned, a severe censorship was introduced, and anti-Jewish measures demanded by Germany were put into practice. After all, it seemed that the world had abandoned Czechoslovakia to Fascism, and that National-Socialism of the German pattern must henceforward be the Czech form of government.

Contrary to expectations, however, General Rudolf Gayda, one-time commander of the Legionnaires and later the leader of the Czech Fascists, did not play the prominent role forecast for him. At one time it was expected that Gayda, although his following was not considerable, would become Premier. But the Syrový Government was replaced by a Cabinet under Rudolf Beran, the head of the Agrarian Party, and the post of Minister for Defence—rejected by Gayda who wanted the Ministry of the Interior—was given to Syrový.

Beran's Government conducted an intensive propaganda against Beneš, the Freemasons and the Jews, who were accused of the responsibility for the collapse of Czechoslovakia—a precise parallel to the attitude of the Vichy Administration, as culminating in the Riom trials. This new official anti-semitism rather took the wind out of Gayda's sails, who had prepared his own plan for the solution of the Jewish problem. Gayda consulted me on a solution of the Jewish problem which would result in expropriation of the Jews without damage to Czech economy. He accepted my proposals, which were based on a forced loan of £2,000,000, to be raised by the Czech Jews. This loan was to facilitate a process of nationalisation, under which English and American Jewry was to enable the transfer of Jewish enterprises to Aryans. While the Czech Jews were to be protected to a certain extent, other Jewish refugees were, according to Gayda, to be deported back to Germany. Gayda had intended to publish

my proposals, which he had accepted, but Hitler's invasion which occurred a short time afterwards, made this impossible.

Six months after Munich the unhappy remainder of Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. By virtue of the Munich Agreement, the State had been destroyed as a living organism. Czechoslovakia had lost nearly one-third of its total area, and five million inhabitants. These inhabitants were not all Germans: 1,160,000 Czechoslovaks came under foreign domination; 738,000 to Germany, 134,000 to Poland, 290,000 to Hungary. The country was deprived of most of its industry and coal deposits, and its economic loss amounted to far more than one-third of its material riches. Forty per cent. of national revenue were lost. The new frontiers cut her railway lines and put the whole of her economic life at the mercy of Germany—not to speak of the impossibility of any defence. The date when the "rump" would be annexed was to Hitler merely a matter of political convenience. Winston Churchill foresaw this inevitable result even when we were "guaranteeing" Czechoslovakia's new frontiers and trying to buy off the shame of Munich with a loan of £10,000,000. Speaking in the House of Commons on October 5, 1938, Mr. Churchill said:

"All is over. Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness . . . I venture to think that in future the Czechoslovak State cannot be maintained as an independent entity. I think you will find that in a period of time which may be measured by years but may be measured only by months, Czechoslovakia will be engulfed in the Nazi régime."

German pressure continued. The Germans remaining in the non-annexed parts of the country did not even bother, as they were entitled, to opt for German nationality: the complete seizure of the Czechoslovak lands was a certainty.

Complete disintegration was promoted by Berlin. The Republic had been divided into three autonomous parts, Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia and Ruthenia, and the Germans were fomenting separatist activities while at the same time charging the Prague Government with its inability to maintain order. On March 14, 1939, Father Josef Tiso, the Premier of Slovakia, returned from Berlin and immediately proclaimed the independence of Slovakia which placed itself under German protection. At the same time the Hungarians invaded Ruthenia, and although Czech troops under General Prchala offered bitter resistance, the country was overrun and annexed. Poland and Hungary now had the long-desired common frontier.

On March 14, too, Puppet President Hácha and Foreign Minister Chvalkovský were summoned to Berlin where they were informed that the German Army was actually marching into Bohemia and Moravia. After a night of mental and even physical torment, aged

Hácha, faced with the threat that Prague would be bombed, had to affix his signature to a document purporting to sanction the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia. The text of this document, extorted by the most brutal form of blackmail, deserves to be reproduced, for it shows that Hitler broke, not only treaties, but even his own unilateral promises. The document said :

“ The Führer to-day, in the presence of the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop, received the Czecho-Slovak President Dr. Hácha, and the Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Chvalkovský, at their request in Berlin. At the meeting the serious situation which had arisen as a result of the events of the past week on what was hitherto Czecho-Slovak territory was closely and frankly examined. Both sides gave expression to their mutual conviction that the aim of all efforts in this part of Central Europe should be the safeguarding of calm, order and peace. The Czecho-Slovak President declared that in order to secure final pacification, he placed the destiny of the Czech people and country with confidence in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich.

“ The Führer accepted this declaration and expressed his determination to take the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich and to guarantee to it an autonomous development of its national life in accordance with its particular characteristics.”

On that day the Germany Army entered Prague, and Hitler's presence polluted the historic Hradčany, scene and witness of Czech glory and Czech humiliation.

This annexation was recognised at least *de facto* by England and France. Even more, £16,000,000 in gold, deposited in London by the Czechoslovak Government for reasons of security, were handed over to the Germans. Sir John (now Lord) Simon, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, actually justified this procedure in Parliament, declaring in reply to a question on June 4, 1939, that this step had been legally correct.

I witnessed the occupation of Prague, where I stayed on for some time and was not at first molested. How I subsequently escaped when the attentions of the Gestapo became too pressing has been told in my book *Czechs against Germans* (Nicholson & Watson, London, 1939). I also witnessed the beginnings of the German campaign of terrorism and plunder.

The looting of the annexed territories proceeded with the usual German thoroughness. It was not done haphazardly: the Germans were provided with detailed information and obviously acting on a preconceived plan. The “Aryanisation” of Jewish enterprises did not bring them into Czech hands, but led to complete Germanisation. Within a few weeks of the occupation the Germans had hauled away

£400,000,000 worth of raw materials, industrial machinery, armaments (whose excellent quality was later confirmed by the British troops against whom they were used in Libya), and other products. They seized the Škoda works, and the Brno small arms factory (whence the "Bren-Gun" derives its name); they carried off £20,000,000 in gold; they established control over all banks and "bought" industrial shares until in effect public and private property, bank accounts as well as art collections, had passed under German control.

Abroad, diplomatic pressure was exerted to seize Czechoslovak representatives. The Japanese arrested the Czechoslovak Minister, Havelka, and have kept him in prison ever since on a charge of "suspected espionage."

The legal form of domination established by Germany over Bohemia-Moravia was something unheard of in European history. The country became a German "Protectorate"—a form of overlordship hitherto applied only to backward native tribes in darkest Africa. In thirteen articles, Hitler's proclamation established this colonial status in complete contradiction to the promise made two days before which assured the Czech people of "an autonomous development of its national life." Thus, all German inhabitants of the territory enjoyed extra-territorial status and were not subjected to its laws. The Reich Protector had an absolute right of interference in all details of administration; communications, post and telephone were under German control, and while maintenance of existing laws was promised, the same article contained the vitiating clause, "except in so far as they contradict the spirit of the protection undertaken by the German Reich." As the Reich Protector had the right to promulgate any decree he liked, the continued existence of a Czech administration—now headed by General Eliáš—had become completely meaningless. Whatever degree of resistance or co-operation might have been provided by President Hácha and his associates now ceased to make any difference. Hácha's signature did not make a German order more palatable to the Czech people, nor would the absence of such signature have made the slightest difference. Whatever utterances emanate from Hácha are dictated and extorted by the enemy.

There are, however, other people who are real quislings, in the sense that they voluntarily collaborate with the enemy. The Czech language press furnishes such examples. I must note this phenomenon with all the pain felt by a journalist who has never in his life written a single line contrary to his convictions and the requirements of truth. It was for this reason that I rejected inducements held out to me by the German Nazi Party in its early years, and that I refused to whitewash the activities of the Slovak autonomists. To me, journalism has been a sacred vocation, and this is why pain and disgust fills me when I

see the names of one-time colleagues over articles that are nothing but German propaganda.

✓ The Czechoslovak Press Bureau, as well as the Czech radio, became nothing more than branches of the corresponding German institutions. The Germans found the Czech press already in a state of demoralisation. A number of papers had ceased appearance after Munich, while the remainder came out under severe censorship and the instructions of the Czech Ministry of Propaganda. Even then, freedom of expression had disappeared, but at least the papers were not obliged to print things with which they disagreed.

With the German occupation a double censorship was introduced. First Czech censors scrutinise each item submitted for publication. Then German censors examine what has been passed, and after this the German Censor-in-Chief issues propaganda matter the insertion of which is compulsory. There is thus not the slightest chance to "write between the lines" and consequently the population has ceased to read the newspapers for anything but official announcements. Many journalists have been arrested and thrown into concentration camps. The same kind of persecution was meted out to all personalities prominent in politics or cultural activities, to former army officers, to intellectuals—in short to all those who might be potential leaders of a nation doomed to slavery.

It is the German aim, not only to subjugate the peoples of Europe, but to prepare even against the eventuality of a lost war. All over Europe the Germans have destroyed universities and other seats of learning, decimated the intellectual classes and denied anything but the most elementary education to the younger generation. Germany's slaves need not know more than is necessary for hewers of wood and drawers of water. These subject races may be given a certain amount of technical training so that they can drive German lorries or operate a switchboard; but higher education is not only superfluous but actually dangerous.

Consequently even after a lost war the whole of Europe will be denuded of persons and institutions providing higher education, and Germany may attempt to establish a monopoly in that field. The German is nothing if not thorough: if it has been said that our generals base their methods of waging war on the experiences of the last war—or even the Boer War—the German General Staff are already preparing for the next.

Czechoslovakia, the most intellectual and advanced of all Slavonic nations, will be in great spiritual danger even after a German defeat, unless the threat is averted by timely measures. Perhaps German university towns are as much a legitimate air target as arms factories...

These apprehensions are no mere speculation. After the last war

the whole educational system of Germany gave evidence of a hopelessly reactionary and war-like spirit. Anyone who doubts this should study pre-Hitler textbooks used in German schools and universities. It will be an important task for the Government of liberated Czechoslovakia to see that German influence can never again become preponderant in education so long as Germany herself has not reverted to civilisation.

Meanwhile a systematic process of Germanisation is going on in Czechoslovakia—a natural consequence of the German conception of “living space.” This philosophy, preached in Germany for a long time, has, unfortunately, also remained something so far away that our leaders knew nothing of it. If it were merely the demand that all Germans should be able to live and work peacefully and to their material satisfaction, nobody would object. But unfortunately the living space theory is insolubly tied up with the *Herrenvolk* conception. Any territory housing even a small group of the master race thereby becomes a legitimate object of German domination—and what is living space for Germans must be the graveyard of the “lesser breeds without the law.” Thus the presence of 100,000 Germans among a nation of millions means simply that that nation must be enslaved and destroyed for the benefit of the 70 millions of the German Reich of whom that minority forms an integral part. For this reason all attempts to solve the German question by population transfers, by the repatriation to Germany of such minorities, were bound to be rejected by Germany. Germany did not want a solution of the Sudeten question which, if the Sudeten Germans so ardently desired return to the Reich, could have been solved by migration and exchange: Germany considered the whole of Bohemia-Moravia its legitimate “Lebensraum” because it contained a German minority.

The Germans are seriously convinced that Providence has fitted them better than any other nation to organise and lead Europe—and the rest of the world, where only Germans are fit to shoulder the “white man’s burden.” The whole of Europe is to be Germany’s colony, in which the Germans are to be the governors, administrators and exploiters, a small number of servile native baboos their helpers and abettors, and the rest, sweated coolies to keep the master race in comfort.

No German has yet been able to realise the colossal arrogance of a conception which simply cannot be grasped by Englishmen who believe in the equality of men and reject the exploitation of other races. Had the leaders of Democracy but studied the writings of Germany’s leaders and taken them seriously Europe and the world would have been spared this terrible war.

As a first step to a complete Germanisation of the Protectorate the Germans duplicated the civil service in the sense that each Czech official was subordinated to a German exercising the same functions. At the same time the German language was made the only official language in the Protectorate, the use of which is compulsory even for communications between purely Czech organs, or in the proceedings of purely Czech municipalities. Any Czech holding even the humblest office must pass a German language examination. As a matter of necessity, laws and other official pronouncements are still promulgated in German and Czech, but only the German version is authoritative.

The Germans paid particular attention to the complete Germanisation of the old Czech city of Prague, where Henlein welcomed Goebbels on his arrival "in the old German town of Prague." The truth is that the city numbered among its one million inhabitants only 40,000 persons of German language, and half of them Jews. Yet almost the whole municipality was taken over by the Germans, only four out of fourteen departments being headed by Czechs. Similar methods were employed in other Czech towns where the Germans seized control of the administration or appointed Czech traitors. But it was not only the towns that were Germanised. A colony must be colonised, and for this purpose a German Colonisation Society (*Deutsche Siedlungsgesellschaft*) was formed which seized large tracts of formerly State-owned land and forests, and also proceeded to shift the Czech population from its soil. Entire villages are forcibly "bought," and the Czech farmers expelled. Often the German purchaser dictates a very low purchase price and afterwards even that is not paid. German settlers are systematically drawn into the country from the Reich; the Colonisation Society finances them, while they are exempt from taxes and the operations of Czech law. This settlement proceeds exactly on the lines followed centuries ago by the Teutonic Knights.

All this went hand in hand with systematic persecution of organised religion. Catholic as well as Protestant ecclesiastical dignitaries were arrested, ill-treated and thrown into concentration camps. Churches and vicarages were plundered and religious instruction in schools has been suppressed. The property of convents was seized and the monks and nuns driven out from their institutions and hospitals. As regards non-Catholic denominations, the Czechoslovak Church has been a special target of persecution. The theological faculty in Prague was closed, many religious associations dissolved, and even the name of the Czechoslovak Church was changed into "Czechomoravian," in order to destroy any reminder of the existence of the Czechoslovak State.

The position of the Jews was particularly sad. Much anti-semitic spadework had been done under the "Second Republic"—between

Munich and the seizure of the Protectorate—by the German-controlled Government and also spontaneously by professional organisations which for reasons of competition expelled their Jewish colleagues. Anti-semitism was fostered even before the Nazis took over the rump State. Czechoslovak Fascist organisations such as the *Vlajka* and the *Aryan Cultural Union* propagated active anti-semitism. In Prague and Brno veritable pogroms took place on orders from Berlin, in which a number of Jews were killed and injured. Anti-semitism became particularly violent in Slovakia. The ninety thousand Jews of Slovakia were persecuted and tortured by the Hlinka Guards, the Slovak equivalent of the German S.A. (stormtroopers). The puppet Government, headed by another Catholic prelate, Father Tiso, instituted large-scale pogroms, burning of synagogues, robbery, expulsion and murder.

The Prague Government of the rump State up to the annexation tried to restrain the more violent forms of anti-semitism and 'merely' proceeded to exclude the Jews from all forms of public and economic life. It realised that Czech economy would not benefit from too sudden and drastic measures. But German pressure was very insistent. The French ambassador in Prague reported to his Government that Dr. Chvalkovský (now Protectorate "ambassador" at Berlin), after a conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop, seemed impressed most by "the importance which Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop attached to the Jewish question—absolutely out of proportion to the importance given to other questions dealt with. Ribbentrop as well as Hitler stated emphatically that it was not possible to give a German guarantee to a State which does not eliminate the Jews."

According to the French ambassador the German leaders told Chvalkovský: "Do not imitate the sentimental and leisurely manner in which we ourselves treated this problem (!). Our kindness was nothing but weakness, and we regret it. This vermin must be destroyed." So the Czechs had no choice but to avoid the "sentimental weakness" which, as the world knows, characterises German dealings with the Jews. Anti-semitic laws based on the Nuremberg Laws were introduced on June 24, 1939.

Henceforward the treatment of the Jews can be described simply by reference to subsequent German methods in occupied Poland and Russia. The aim of German policy in this respect was wholesale extermination; and since before the outbreak of the war the civilised nations of the world seemed agreed that the physical extermination of a few million Jews was not too high a price to pay for the maintenance of "peace," the Germans encountered no particular obstacles in their policy of massacre. Several civilised nations in Western Europe no longer recognised the validity of Czechoslovak passports,

and thus refused the admission of refugees, since they could obviously not be asked to allow the entry of people whose papers were "not in order."

It should be said in honour of Hácha and Beran, as well as of General Eliáš, who succeeded Beran as Prime Minister, that they tried to delay and obstruct the worst anti-Jewish excesses. But the Reichsprotector, von Neurath, overruled them and introduced the Nuremberg laws on the Nazi pattern. Jews were deported to the murder camps and gas chambers of the Lublin "reservation," and the National Solidarity Organisation—the single substitute for all political parties which was set up with the Protector's permission—introduced a complete boycott of the remaining Jews. A special ghetto was opened in Terezín for elderly persons.

The virus of anti-semitism, like that of pestilence, is carried across national frontiers by the ether waves, settling in many apparently unlikely places. Isolated cases that have from time to time appeared in the Czechoslovak forces are, of course, frowned upon by the Czechoslovak Government. In an address to the Czechoslovak Army in Britain, Dr. Beneš said in 1941 :

"Our people are not and never will be anti-semitic. Masaryk used to say that anti-semitism is bestiality and barbarism. Anti-semitism does not and never will exist in the Czech milieu. But it is necessary for both sides concerned always to be tolerant and prudent, showing human understanding and maintaining a high level."

Dr. Ripka informed the so-called "Jewish World Congress" that :

"The Jewish soldiers serving in our Army and all those who are helping us in our present struggle may rest assured that the Czechoslovak Government fully appreciates this help. They may also rightly keep in mind that after victory has been won in this struggle for freedom, the freedom of the Jews will also not be forgotten. For us Czechoslovaks freedom has never been a mere word."

CHAPTER NINE

OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

WHILE in England, in 1939, Dr. Beneš was not allowed to indulge in political activities. The Chamberlain Government had recognised the factual situation, and did not wish to "annoy Hitler." It took nearly a year and a half after Munich before the National Committee formed by Dr. Beneš was recognised as a provisional Government.

Shortly after Munich there were mass demonstrations in America, convened by the Czech National Alliance. At one of them, in Chicago, Jan Masaryk read the following message from Dr. Beneš :

"We were sold out with the aid of the Devil himself. To-day we must begin to work. We can weep a little, but not for long. The time for work has come : we must work for our people suffering there at home. Humanity ! You cannot utter a single word here in Europe. That is how deeply we have sunk."

This *cri de coeur* speaks volumes. On behalf of the President, Jan Masaryk told the Chicago meeting :

"I know that after what just happened the people of Czechoslovakia are without defence and must yield to brutal force. But you, Czechs and Slovaks all over the world who are free remember that the struggle to liberate man, to liberate the people of Czechoslovakia has not ceased and will not cease until freedom is restored to Central Europe and the Czech and Slovak lands.

"Guided by this spirit all free Czechs and Slovaks will follow the ideals of T. G. Masaryk, just as we did during and after the world war. In the same spirit, together, inseparable, determined, we will work for the freedom of our dear homeland. Aggression and slavery have never endured for long. Nor will the present aggression and slavery last. A free Europe will again be established, with free Czechs and Slovaks in it. Surely you understand the seriousness and meaning of recent events. United, inseparable in brotherhood, prepare for the Nation's freedom in Europe."

For a short time Beneš lived quietly in a small house in Putney, a south-west London suburb, where he stayed with his nephew, Bohuš Beneš. But he took the first opportunity to go to America where he was permitted to speak his mind on what was happening to his people. On March 5, 1939, only ten days before the final downfall of his country, Dr. Beneš took part in a radio discussion held over the network of the National Broadcasting Company in co-operation with the Chicago University Broadcasting Corporation. His interlocutors were Quincy Wright, Professor of International Law, and Bernadotte E.

Schmitt, Professor of Modern History at Chicago University. Dr. Beneš, the good European, saw farther than British or even American public opinion, which was still divided at the time. "The European crisis," he stated, "can be settled only as a whole, and the question of Czechoslovakia is only one part of it."

"I am convinced that Democracy in Europe is not dead. I am convinced that in this tension and strife the spiritual fight between the totalitarian and democratic ideologies will continue for a certain time; that the final victory of democratic ideology is, however, a law of social evolution. If for a certain time the democratic ideas are eclipsed they will arise again, and Europe will be safe. But Europe must in the future organise a new democratic system based on a European federative conception. Otherwise Europe will progressively decay and finally perish . . . Federal Europe is impossible with the co-existence of dictatorships and democracies. These two conceptions," said Dr. Beneš, hereby revising his former utterances on non-interference in the domestic affairs of the dictatorships, "eliminate each other."

Already Dr. Beneš could foresee the war which Mr. Chamberlain believed he had banished "for our time."

And when the Germans had entered Prague, on the morning of March 15, 1939, Dr. Beneš sent the following telegram to President Roosevelt, Prime Ministers Chamberlain and Daladier and Foreign Commissar Litvinov:

"The Czech and Slovak people are victims of a great international crime. The people of Czechoslovakia cannot protest to-day and, because of the happenings of the last months, cannot defend themselves. I, as former President of Czechoslovakia, address this solemn protest to you. Last September the Franco-British proposals and, a few days afterwards, the Munich decisions were presented to me. Both these documents contained the promise of the guarantee of the integrity and security of Czech territory. Both these documents asked for unheard-of sacrifices by my people in the interest of European peace. These sacrifices were made by the people of Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless one of the Great Powers who signed the Agreement of Munich is now dividing our territory, is occupying it with its army, and is establishing a 'Protectorate' under threat of force and military violence."

"Before the conscience of the world and before history I am obliged to proclaim that the Czechs and Slovaks will never accept this unbearable imposition on their sacred rights and will never cease their struggle until right is restored to their country. I entreat your Government to refuse to recognise this crime and to assume the

consequences which to-day's tragic situation in Europe and in the world urgently requires."

But the simple dignity of this moving protest found no immediate echo in the Chancelleries of Europe. Only the United States Government reacted promptly. On the following day already, Mr. Sumner Welles, following a personal conference with President Roosevelt, addressed a very blunt official note to the German Government in which he said :

"The Government of the United States has observed that the provinces referred to [in a German circular note] are now under *de facto* domination of the German authorities. The Government of the United States does not recognise that any legal basis exists for the status so indicated."

But in Europe there were only voices of dignified protest and restrained indignation, pointing out that Herr Hitler really seemed to have gone too far, and that his actions were difficult to reconcile with the Munich Agreement. But not a gun was moved, not a soldier mobilised. After a few weeks Czechoslovakia ceased to be front page news, a position gradually assumed by Poland. A few days after his message, on March 19, 1939, Dr. Beneš addressed a crowded meeting in Chicago. He stated :

"Do not believe that it was a question of self-determination for a minority. From the beginning it has been a battle for the existence of the State. A dictatorship cannot tolerate freedom. A dictatorship can permit no liberty, no democracy in its vicinity. It was and will be a battle for the existence of a free nation opposed by a totalitarian State which denies freedom. The last move of the German dictatorship proves it.

"For twenty years I have worked for peace. For a real peace. But to-day there is no peace in Europe. What is considered a state of peace is but a terrible illusion, an illusion which will one day take its toll in the enormous sacrifice of all the nations of the world. For there is war already—yes, there is war to-day in Europe ; but it is a one-sided war, in which one side wages war while the other is forced to submit. And again I say to the world that everybody must understand that there will be no peace, there will be no respite, there will be no order until the crimes that have been committed in Europe are wiped out, until there is again respect for the pledged word, until the idea of honesty—personal honesty and State honesty—is re-established, until the principles of the individual and international liberty are secured and until real courage takes command and tells brute force to stop."

In America Dr. Beneš found enthusiastic support. As a generation before, the names of Masaryk and Beneš were closely connected with

the work of national liberation. In the last war it had been Eduard Beneš's brother, Vojta, who, as secretary of the Czechoslovak National Council in America, did much of the organisational work. This time his son, Bohus Beneš, took up where his father had left off. Another great leader in his own right was Jan Masaryk, the President-Liberator's son. He went on an extensive lecture tour all over America, and was greeted everywhere as the ambassador of Czechoslovak freedom.

Another ardent worker was Jan Masaryk's sister, Dr. Alice Masaryk, President of the Czechoslovak Red Cross, on whom Pittsburgh University conferred an honorary degree as "a symbol of good will towards Czechoslovakia."

There are certain formalities which must not be neglected by a statesman, even if everybody is aware of their futility. Dr. Beneš fulfilled one such duty when he sent a protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia to the General Secretary of the League of Nations, M. Joseph Avenol. In this note Dr. Beneš stated :

"Although Czechoslovakia still exists legally, it is temporarily under a régime of oppression and terrorism and deprived of every opportunity to represent itself in Geneva and demand its rights. I trust therefore that as the former President of the Czechoslovak Republic, one who has worked in its name for seventeen years in the League of Nations; one devoted to the idea of promoting and strengthening international peace, and who has been elected President of the Assembly and on several occasions President of the Council of the League of Nations, I hope that I may be permitted to-day to appeal to the Council to uphold the rights of the League."

This appeal from an exile to a shadow strikes a macabre note of unreality. More realistic and fruitful was the step taken a few days later, in the first week of April, 1939, when the great majority of Czechoslovaks abroad, including some Slovak and Sudeten German loyalists, approached Dr. Beneš with the request to assume leadership in the struggle for the liberation of the country. Their appeal was supported also by voices from Czechoslovakia proper. It was then that Beneš broke his silence in order to speak for the homeland whose voice could no longer be heard. Replying to the delegates, he said :

"At your request I place myself at the head of our independence movement . . . Now that a fresh injustice has been perpetrated with the military occupation of our country I am again free to speak and to act.

"I ask you to stand firmly in complete harmonious unity and co-operation, to disregard all partisanship, all religious, social and other differences, and to remain united by the ideals of American Democracy. In so doing you are backing the ideals of Czechoslovak Democracy and freedom."

After five months spent at Chicago University President Beneš returned to London. At first he found less understanding there than in Paris which he visited frequently, renewing contacts with friends and allies among French statesmen. Britain did not recognise Dr. Beneš and his Committee as anything in the nature of a provisional government, nor were repeated requests for the formation of a Czechoslovak army acceded to. However, the British Broadcasting Corporation inaugurated a Czech news bulletin, and in the first talk thus broadcast Jan Masaryk said :

“ By the name I bear I declare that we shall win the fight and that truth will prevail. The hour of reparation has come. The patience of the Western Democracies is exhausted and the struggle against Nazism is beginning. Our programme is a free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe and to attain this aim we are ready to make every sacrifice. In a short time the Czechoslovak Legions will again fight on the side of the Allied Army.”

Czech insistence on the formation of a Czech Legion springs from the recollection that the Czechoslovak Legion in the last war was one of the most potent factors in obtaining recognition. In the summer of 1939 there were already available numbers of Czechoslovak soldiers and officers who had escaped to Poland. But it took the actual outbreak of the present war to bring about the formation of a Czechoslovak army.

Up to the outbreak of the war Dr. Beneš, while in England, had to step warily so as not to offend the susceptibilities of the appeasers. He made his first public speech before the Liberal Summer School at Cambridge on August 6, 1939. Explaining why he limited himself to a discussion of general principles, he said that there might be some disappointment that he did not speak of the events of yesterday and to-day. But as a guest in this country he did not wish to discuss questions which at the moment might be thought controversial. Dr. Beneš then stated that very severe criticism could, and should, be passed on the practice, procedure and methods of the European democracies—the great old democracies as well as the smaller and newer ones. Their lack of belief and faith in their own principles, their lack of civic courage, their utilitarian opportunism, their lack of real knowledge of concrete problems showed that it was necessary not merely to oppose the principles of authoritarianism, to preach Democracy and to speak in highly laudatory terms about the freedom of man and nations.

“ One must also,” said Dr. Beneš, “ have the right conception of Democracy as a theory, and the courage to put these theories into practice justly and courageously.

“ The dictatorships have a mystical conception of the people and of the nation. They deify the Nation, they deify the State, they

identify the State and the Nation, and a Duce or Führer are the natural leaders as expressions of the nation and the almighty State as opposed to parties, classes and individuals. The only origin of these leaders is through revolution, and they have not yet formulated their policy as to succession of leadership.

"As a democrat I do not admit that the authoritarian system of government is justified, for it is a travesty of government. Because it is a travesty, it cannot endure. I believe also that the leaders of an authoritarian government can never be the real leaders of a human, universal and Christian morality, of real human education and erudition.

"The judgment of history," continued Dr. Beneš, "Has already condemned the dictatorial system of government and also their ideas. The events of the next few years in Europe and in the world will show to the present generation that this judgment of history was right. My scientific conviction is that this judgment was right. There never existed a society in which the fight for freedom and the development of the free human personality ceased altogether. In the darkest periods of history this fight continued, continues to-day, and will continue until the new victory of freedom is won.

Democracy will be victorious because it is the line of social evolution and the philosophy of history. The victory of Democracy and freedom in Europe means the liberation of my country."

A few days later formal declaration of war made the conflict visible to the world. For Czechoslovakia, it dated already from September 30, 1938, and this date is the official beginning of the war proclaimed by the Czechoslovak Government.

On September 3 President Beneš conferred with his lieutenants and then announced that Czechoslovakia and her people inside and outside the country were in the war to fight for a free Europe. He put the resources of his Committee at the disposal of the Allies.

It took Mr. Chamberlain six days to reply to this offer on behalf of a far-away people of whom, by now, he knew more. In a guarded letter, dated September 9, 1939, Chamberlain wrote to Beneš:

"The sufferings of the Czech nation are not forgotten, and we look forward, through the triumph of the principle for which we have taken up arms, to the relief of the Czech people from foreign domination."

It will be noted that this message is careful to speak only of the "Czech" people, but that the political term "Czechoslovakia" is not mentioned; nor can the promised "relief from foreign domination" be construed as a repudiation of Munich.

Meanwhile volunteers flocked to the Czech colours, 1,500 of them from Palestine which some of the Jewish victims of Munich

had succeeded in reaching despite the obstructions placed in their way. In France all Czechoslovaks were called up and at first incorporated in French units. Volunteers arose in the Dominions, particularly in Canada—many of them soldiers and officers but recently trained. In France four hundred Czech pilots were available. But the formation of a Czechoslovak Legion was not sanctioned by the British Government, nor was the formation of a provisional Government favoured by Whitehall. The war was only a few weeks old, and there were circles still believing in the possibility of a negotiated peace with Hitler.

President Beneš, however, diagnosed the issue more correctly. On September 19, 1939, he broadcast a stirring appeal to his countrymen at home, in which he said :

“ The time has come when deeds decide the destiny of peoples, nations and States. History is not made by words, but by deeds which vouch for the nation's worth. The mad barbarism of Nazi Germany in Czechoslovakia, Poland and even in Germany itself, shows that the Nazi leaders are fully aware that their régime is nearly at an end. They are therefore taking their revenge, dealing blows right and left and raging in a senseless manner against their own countrymen and the rest of Europe. This fateful time is our time and it depends on us to show the whole world that we are prepared and determined to contribute all our forces and our means to the defeat of the greatest enemy of humanity and culture.”

The President continued his appeal to his countrymen at home :

“ Remember the most glorious feats of your history when often the small, ill-armed Czech nation repulsed with the greatest success the foreign invaders of the sacred soil of our motherland and assailed their fleeing remnants in the frontier zone, temporarily occupied a year ago.

“ The peoples of the whole world are rising,” Dr. Beneš stated, “ and will continue to rise to defend with their lives your freedom as well as their own. To-day we are sure that Czechoslovakia will rise in her old frontiers. You, Czechoslovak people, must be among the first and most valorous in the fight. All of us must to-day be ready to sacrifice even our lives for our country and for our honour. Do not forget that a tyrannical oppressor, who is in an unfamiliar environment, cannot in the end have either the moral strength or the material means to meet your united force and your relentless determination. Your steadiness and resolution will prevent the violent forces of Nazism from attaining their object, the enslaving and obliteration of the Czechoslovak people. To-day the retreat from the tyranny of Nazism is ended. In France, in England, and in all the allied States, millions of men and millions of tons of material are ready to strike a decisive blow against the German danger that is menacing the

world. The whole civilised world is rising to remove once and for all this danger. Your place, Czechoslovak citizen, is to-day in the front line. The whole world is looking to you, recognising your determined resistance, and is expecting that, day after day, you will deal hard blows at your enemy.

“ Throughout the whole country,” the President invoked his people, “ from the last village up to Prague, in every workshop, in every enterprise, wherever you are, you must continue to carry on this struggle ; there must be no place in the whole of our Czechoslovak country which will not show evidence of your holy determination to bear every sacrifice for your country. Czechoslovak soldiers abroad are gathering to march side by side with the Allied Armies, offering the greatest sacrifice of all, their lives. While we abroad are raising the Czechoslovak banner, you, too, the Czechoslovak people, hold fast to the flag of our nation and State as the symbol of our new struggle. The war will not cease until the Nazi régime is destroyed and our enemies defeated. The Allied air forces will often appear over your towns and will bring encouragement and assistance. Let us pledge ourselves that from this day we shall each of us stand, unshakable and uncompromising in the daily struggle against the criminal régime and against the enemy who defiled our holy Hradčany and who will pay dearly for it. Now let us go forward, united in our struggle for a free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe.”

This appeal had immediate results. A wave of resistance and sabotage swept the Protectorate, and bloody clashes took place.

However, in writing on resistance and “ underground ” movements in occupied Europe we must strive to preserve a sense of proportion. Melodramatic novels and films have induced us to believe in a state of things which, however desirable, does not exist to quite the same extent as Hollywood with its black-and-white technique, would have us accept. Nothing derogatory to the many actual and unsung heroes of underground resistance is implied when we take a factual view of things.

One of these facts is that, in the first years of the war, life was bound to go on in occupied Europe much as before. Manual workers, commercial employees, officials and civil servants had to go on working in order to eat. And inevitably the continued existence of administrative machinery and industrial production, however grudgingly and slowly carried out by reluctant workers, was bound to benefit the Germans. In view of modern armaments the preponderance of the military is such that an armed rising in Europe unsupported by military pressure from outside was tantamount to suicide, except where the country offers natural facilities for guerrilla warfare. Thus, what was possible to the fighters of Yugoslavia, to the guerrillas among

the hills and forests of Carpatho-Ruthenia, was not possible in Bohemia and Moravia.

There is now undoubtedly a good deal of sabotage—mainly of goods in transit, since German supervision of factories and mines is so strict that very little can be done ; yet the constant executions carried out by the Germans show how harmful Czech resistance is to their industrial war effort.

No doubt we shall learn the full extent of Czech resistance in all its forms when publication of these facts will be safe. Unfortunately the Germans are neither as stupid nor as inefficient as depicted by Hollywood's illusion factories, which show the Germans, including the Gestapo, as blundering asses of abysmal stupidity. The handsome hero, dropped by parachute, does not even have to speak German : it suffices for him to steal a uniform in order to outwit the Gestapo and the General Staff, obtain the secret plans, blow up half the German Army, and then steal a Luftwaffe plane so that he and the heroine can arrive at their mutually satisfactory destination.

As in other countries of occupied Europe, the underground press had an important part to play. It was particularly important in the early days of the occupation, notably before the outbreak of the present war, when the Czechoslovak people, following the shattering experience of Munich, felt completely deserted, so that the door stood open to Nazi propaganda. The underground press had a lion's share in countering this propaganda. Since the outbreak of the present war, however, almost all sections of the people have shown their unshakable determination to resist German oppression ; and therefore the work of the underground press has lost some of its former significance.

It is impossible to estimate the number of clandestine publications in Czech ; but the following five newspapers should be mentioned : *V Boj* (Into Battle), *Č.S.R.* (Czechoslovak Republic), *I.S.N.O.* (Information Service of the National Liberation Movement), *Kurýr* (Courier), and *Svoboda* (Liberty).

In the early days of occupation the most popular and best underground paper, *V Boj*, had its works in the centre of the city. This location was boldly selected on the principle expressed by the Czech proverb : " The darkest spot is underneath the candle. " The hide-out was discovered by the Gestapo in November, 1939. There were two men present who used firearms in defence ; one was killed and the other wounded and arrested. The Gestapo then arrested the chief editor, Josef Skalda, who was the backbone of the enterprise. A retired police officer, who knew all the tricks of underground work, he was skilful in finding collaborators, collecting articles and surrounding himself with loyal men, who were prepared tirelessly to turn the handle of the duplicating machine night and day, thereby

ensuring the regular weekly production of the newspaper. Articles were frequently written in cafés in the centre of Prague, often with German officers sitting at neighbouring tables. Other articles, type-written and signed with fictitious names, were brought by couriers unknown to the underground publishers. On September 12, 1941, Skalda was sentenced to death in Berlin and was executed in June, 1942, after long martyrdom. Nevertheless, the remaining members of the group carried on and the paper reappeared.

Secret groups are also active in monitoring from foreign radio transmissions, especially London. The bulletins are stencilled and hectographed. The service is well organised and probably reaches a very considerable number of sympathisers.

Some time ago the Russian press charged the Czechs with insufficient resistance. But these claims were made before experience in Poland demonstrated how hopeless and needlessly costly a popular rising in unsuitable country or in cities must remain against modern armaments. Meanwhile the extent to which Czech resistance even in its present form is hampering the enemy has been universally recognised.

The Germans now forcibly enrol Czechs in the German Army. They should have known their history better; as in the first World War, many of these soldiers deserted at the first opportunity—a fact widely reported from the Italian front. Yet the majority of the Czechs are not being used in the armed forces, despite the fact that Germany, now confronted with final and inevitable disaster, is feverishly scraping the bottom of the barrel. The Czechs are still being employed in industry and agriculture, and a hundred thousand German soldiers and police are needed to watch them. The progressive intensification of German terror shows that sabotage has increased. The Reich Protector, von Neurath, who was considered too lenient, was recalled and replaced by Heydrich, the sadistic butcher who was assassinated. As a gesture of retaliation, the Germans killed the inhabitants of a village—Lidice—and destroyed it completely. This incident captured the imagination of the civilised world, and Lidice has become a symbol of German brutality and the suffering of the oppressed nations.

* * *

In February, 1943, K. H. Frank, the German "Gauleiter," announced that, as a reprisal for a speech broadcast by President Beneš, "a number of Czech intellectuals from the former circle of Beneš's friends have for the time being been thrown into a concentration camp" and that "an appropriate number of other members of the Czech destructive intellectual class will also be thrown into a concentration camp while the right is reserved to take severer measure."

if Dr. Beneš continues in future to incite the Czech population of the Protectorate to resistance.

The Czech Government in London retorted by recalling its resolution of June 17, 1942, that for all the German crimes committed in Czechoslovak territory, or against Czechoslovak citizens, are personally responsible all those who have committed, instigated, aided and abetted them. The following in particular are personally responsible :

1. Adolf Hitler and the Members of his Government.
2. All the representatives of the German Government and of the administration of the Nazi Party on Czechoslovak territory from Henlein, Frank and their companions to Neurath, Bertsch and Daluge, as well as all German official and military personages on Czechoslovak territory such as the *Oberlandräte*, *Landräte*, commanders, leaders and all members of the German administrative, police, judicial and military apparatus, including the Gestapo, the SS and SA detachments and all the other German military and police formations.
3. All other Germans who have supported the culprits even though indirectly or who have approved their conduct.

Responsible also are all the local traitors who have been guilty of offence against the State, the people or the citizens loyal to the State since the first German acts of violence against the Czechoslovak Republic.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was allotted the task of notifying to all Allied Governments the new crime of the German occupiers and the Government's determination to punish it even in the persons who bear the most distant share of the guilt for it.

The Ministry of Justice was given the task of preparing with all speed a draft law concerning the punishment of the guilty which will at the right time be incorporated into the body of valid Czechoslovak law.

Commenting on the German reprisal measures in the B.B.C.'s Czechoslovak broadcast, Dr. J. Slávik, the Minister of Interior, said that such a quick and brutal reaction to President Beneš's broadcast was unheard of and was being used for the first time in the whole of occupied Europe. It was unheard of even in Nazi practice which can no longer easily present surprises with unexpected acts of lunacy. Herr Frank should take note of the fact—Dr. Slávik continued—that no one was intimidated by his threats. Neither President Beneš nor the Czechoslovak Government would cease to defend the true interests of the Republic of true Czechs and Slovaks, they would not cease in their struggle against the German usurper, they would not cease until justice had been meted out to all torturers and murderers. If K. H. Frank increased the havoc he was spreading, so much the greater would be the punishment that will be meted out to him and

to all of those whom the Czechoslovak Government in their declaration have called criminals, traitors, aiders and abettors of the crimes committed against the Czechoslovak nation. It will also strike the so-called *Gruppenführer* and State Secretary Frank and his Henleinist and Nazi comrades, *Gauleiter* Henlein, *Obersturmbannführer* Judex, *Brigadeführer* and *Regierungspräsident* Krebs, *S.A. Standartenführer* Pfitzner, Walter Bertsch, Lieut.-General von Friderici, von Gregory, State Secretary Karmasin, as well as the members of the so-called Slovak Government, who will answer either for treasonable activity or for cowardly collaboration with the occupiers.

The foregoing Government declaration repeated the essence of a broadcast made by President Beneš on June 13, 1942, in which, after enumerating the culprits who will be held personally responsible, he said :

“ Germany has in our territory, through the intermediary of all these persons, systematically violated and is violating all the principles of international law, she is slaughtering, robbing and destroying whole villages, killing innocent people and systematically committing mass murders, not in order lawfully to punish a person guilty of some offence but in order bestially to sow empty horror round about her. As we are at war with Germany we apply to all these people our military law which prescribes the punishment of death for all these actions. On the first day of our victory we shall have this decision reaffirmed by the competent legal and political body and mercilessly carried out with all consequences.

“ We shall not cease our demands for justice until the above-mentioned culprits, whom we shall either find in our own territory or whose extradition we shall most emphatically demand, according to the decision of January 13th, 1942, made at St. James's by the Allies, fully receive their well-merited punishment which will be carried out without pardon and without mercy.”

CHAPTER TEN

“PRAVDA VITEZI”—TRUTH SHALL CONQUER

ABROAD, Czechoslovak refugees are rendering valuable services to the Allied Cause. Part of the Czechoslovak Army was evacuated from France and re-formed in Britain. This army had fought well in France and was reorganised on British soil. On October 27, 1940, an agreement was concluded as to the status of the Army. The Czechoslovak land forces form an independent unit under their own officers, while the Czechoslovak Air Force, possessing its own bomber and fighter squadrons, is incorporated in the Royal Air Force. The Czechoslovak flyers covered themselves with glory in the Battle of Britain in August, 1940, when they shot down 137 German planes and damaged many more. Since then Czechoslovak airmen have seen action on many fronts, and several of them have achieved fame, among them the well-known Czech air ace, Kuttelwascher, who received high British decorations.

The Czechoslovak land forces have been in action in the Mediterranean war theatre, and have acquitted themselves with gallantry and distinction.

The Czechoslovak Army thus possesses the full status of an Allied army and not merely that of an auxiliary force. This arrangement followed recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government by Britain. On July 21, 1940, Lord Halifax addressed the following letter to Dr. Beneš:

“In the light of exchanges of view which have taken place between us, I have the honour to inform you that, in response to the request of the Czechoslovak National Committee, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are happy to recognise and enter into relations with the Provisional Czechoslovak Government established by the Czechoslovak National Committee to function in this country.”

Thus the principal demand of the Czechoslovaks abroad was fulfilled. The Provisional Government formed under the Presidency of Dr. Beneš had eight Czech and five Slovak ministers. In addition there was formed a body which, to a certain extent, was a substitute for a Parliament, though its function was merely advisory—the State Council.

Its members represented, as far as possible, all shades of opinion and nationality.

Britain had woken up from the dream of appeasement: Winston Churchill had succeeded Neville Chamberlain. On the second

anniversary of Munich Mr. Churchill summed up the British point of view in the following message :

“ To-day is the second anniversary of the Munich agreement, a date which the world will always remember for the tragic sacrifice made by the Czechoslovak people in the interest of European peace. The hopes which this agreement stirred in the heart of civilised mankind have been frustrated. Within six months the solemn pledges given by the unscrupulous men who control the destiny of Germany were broken and the agreement destroyed with a ruthlessness which unmasked the true nature of their reckless ambitions to the whole world. The protection which Hitler forced upon you has been a sham and a cloak for the incorporation of your once flourishing country in the so-called Great Reich. Instead of protection he has brought you nothing but moral and material devastation, and to-day the followers of that great and tolerant humanitarian, President Masaryk, are being persecuted with a deliberate cruelty which has few parallels in modern history.

“ In this hour of your martyrdom I send you this message. The battle which we in Britain are fighting to-day is not only our battle ; it is also your battle, and, indeed, the battle of all nations who prefer liberty to a soul-less serfdom. It is the struggle of civilised nations for the right to live their own life in the manner of their own choosing. It represents man's instinctive defiance of tyranny and of an impersonal universe.

“ Throughout history no European nation has shown a greater will to survive than yours, and to-day again your people have given countless proofs of their courage in adversity. Here in Britain we have welcomed, with pride and gratitude, your soldiers and airmen who have come by daring escapes to take part with ever-increasing success in that battle for Britain which is also the battle for Czechoslovakia. And no less sincere is our admiration of those Czechs and Slovaks who on the home front are risking death, and worse than death, in order to foster resistance against a cruel and heartless oppressor.

“ It is because we both are fighting for the fundamental decencies of human life that we are determined that neither our struggle nor your struggle shall be in vain. It is for this reason that we have refused to recognise any of the brutal conquests of Germany in Central Europe and elsewhere, that we have welcomed a Czechoslovak Provisional Government in this country, and that we have made the restoration of Czechoslovak liberties one of our principal war aims. With firmness and resolution, two qualities which our nations share in equal measure, these aims will be achieved. Be of good cheer. The hour of your deliverance will come. The soul of freedom is deathless ; it cannot, and will not, perish.”

And on November 11, 1940, an official note of the British Government declared that it did not feel itself bound by the Munich frontiers—nor by any other frontiers in Central Europe. In a negative way, at least, Munich was liquidated. On the other hand, no pronouncement has as yet been made regarding the frontiers of the future Czechoslovakia. Czech aims are, of course, clear: the restored Czechoslovak State must be a continuation of the pre-Munich Republic. Thus, Dr. Beneš declared a month after the aforementioned British note:

“Nothing that took place before and after Munich was done voluntarily on our part. The lawful Czechoslovak Government never agreed to the occupation of Czechoslovak territory . . . Nothing which took place under compulsion will be recognised by us.”

Czechoslovakia was, of course, ready to negotiate on all matters in dispute. “Only through new negotiations,” continued President Beneš, “into which we enter of our own free will, can there be established definite frontiers, compensation for what we have suffered, and our new international position. Our citizens will have freely, and with supreme authority, to decide the character of the new internal structure of our State.

“We fully realise that we are not only at war, but that we are passing through what is evidently a prolonged revolutionary period, bound to bring about profound changes everywhere. Where necessary, therefore, we must extend our conception of legal continuity by including other conceptions derived from our notions of the liberation struggle, and from ideas which international and domestic events, resulting from the present war, and further possible transformations, will impose upon it.

“We must have a proper understanding of these revolutionary times and of the events forming their contents.”

This was but a preliminary to a final and definite repudiation of Munich as announced in the diplomatic notes exchanged by the British and Czechoslovak Governments on August 5, 1942.

* * *

President Beneš's Government has worked out plans which, though not yet complete in all details, foreshadow the future position of liberated Czechoslovakia.

The general slogan is “A free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe.” The meaning of this phrase is that Europe and, indeed, the whole world, must be democratised. No longer can the co-existence of democracies and Fascist dictatorships be envisaged as even a dialectical possibility. Dr. Hubert Ripka expressed this in an address to the Czechoslovak State Council, in which he said:

“Democratisation throughout the world, so that all nations may acknowledge and, through their politics, adopt certain fundamental

ideas—the idea of political and social freedom ; the idea of the equality of rights for individuals and nations ; unfettered respect for the law to which all, including Governments, are subject ; the principle of the right and duty to perform work ; the principle of public control, exercised by freely elected bodies, over policy and economic management.”

In this new world there will be no place for Nazism. In a lecture at Cambridge University in May, 1941, President Beneš stated :

“ Nazism and Fascism as a theory and doctrine, as political practice both in the domestic and the international realm, as a dictatorial and totalitarian order, must be destroyed and definitely eliminated. There is no possible compromise between Nazism and Democracy ; it is unrealisable, impossible, illusory. Such a compromise would represent only a short breathing-space, and not peace ; it would be a deceit and not a real understanding ; war would quickly break out again, and under the worst conditions for Democracy. This elimination is possible only through a consistently conducted and victorious war from without, accompanied by a revolution and upheaval inside Germany and in the other occupied countries. To conclude any sort of peace, even after the final military victory of the democratic States, would mean losing the war once again. The institutions, doctrines and dominating personalities of this régime must disappear once and for all, as a crime, a moral evil, an obstruction in the path of the healthy growth of humanity in our times.”

In order to bring this about Mr. Jan Masaryk demands constant vigour and vigilance. Addressing the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences at Philadelphia on April 11, 1942, he said :

“ We all look forward to seeing international law re-established in its own right. But respect for law will very much depend upon the availability of functioning institutions by means of which it can be brought into harmony with the social forces from which it receives its vitality. Law is the element of stability, but no strait-jacket. Political science and all the other social sciences will be of ever-growing importance to our own generation and to those who will come after us. They will provide us with fresh knowledge from the field of group life, and it will be the task of statesmanship to act on the basis of that knowledge. There must not be that lag between inquiry and action which is partly responsible for our present plague.”

A World Commonwealth must be established in which a confederated Europe will form an essential element.

But, as Dr. Beneš points out, “ political democracy must be completed by economic and social democracy. This will limit private property in many respects . . . There will be deliberately and systematically created economic co-operativism ; and there will be solidarity

in respect of all possible forms of common property. Districts, towns, States, public utility corporations, etc., will own property in common.

“In the case of certain States these changes will evidently go very deep, in accordance with their particular conditions and the degree of their development. But the important thing is that this new system should remain democratic and not become totalitarian, and that the principle of individual freedom should guide both in the economic and the social realm. Not the pure freedom of classical liberalism. To this the new post-war economic order cannot, I think, return. But economic and social democracy will not exclude—in fact it will demand—a certain fundamental and essential degree of human freedom and dignity, both spiritual and material. The inalienable right should be secured to the individual to remain unmolested and undisturbed in the exercise of his human privileges. And this applies also to industrial activity and to social legislation in post-war democratic Europe, whatever form is assumed by our attempts to resolve our economic problems.”

Dr. Beneš sought a solution of East-European problems in a system of European federations, beginning with a confederation between Czechoslovakia and Poland. Since the outbreak of war the Czechs sought close collaboration with the Polish émigré Government in London, then the only lawful Polish authority. An agreement with a view to close co-operation was signed already in 1940, when General Ladislav Sikorski, the late Polish Prime Minister, declared: “We have made up our minds to forget the past.” However, among the things forgotten by the Poles to this day is their occupation of Těšín, and although it is not at present under the factual jurisdiction of the Polish émigrés in London, it would be a friendly gesture if they renounced that piece of booty, appropriated when Czechoslovakia lay prostrate.

Czecho-Polish collaboration was based on the initiative of Dr. Beneš while still in Paris, and on November 11, 1940, a declaration was signed in which both States agreed to federation.

This development had already been foreshadowed by President-Liberator Masaryk who, in his work *New Europe*, stated as long ago as 1918: “Without a Free Czechoslovakia a Free Poland could not exist, and an independent Czechoslovakia is unthinkable without a Free Poland.”

Finally, on January 23, 1942, there was signed in London a Charter for the peoples of Poland and Czechoslovakia, amplifying the preliminary agreement of a confederation. High hopes were entertained at that time, although it could be seen even then that the Polish émigré circles in London were reactionary and chauvinistic in their outlook,

and had embarked on an anti-Russian policy which was both unrealistic and irresponsible. Confederation between an intelligent, advanced and pro-Russian nation like the Czechs, and Poland, was pregnant with future difficulties. The Poles, numbering only twenty million out of a total population of the former Polish State of thirty-five million have so often proved their political romanticism and irresponsibility that it is difficult to visualise them as peaceful and productive partners in any federation. However, at that time messages were broadcast which were in keeping with that political honeymoon. Dr. Ripka said :

“ We are well aware that if the confederation that we are preparing is to fulfil the tasks which will fall to it, both for the defence of the interests of the member States and for the ensuring of European peace, economic prosperity and peace-loving collaboration among the nations firmly based on justice, it is necessary that the foreign, military, economic, social, financial, communications and cultural policies of all the member States should be co-ordinated. This naturally assumes a foreign policy that should be, if not identical in all details, then certainly parallel in fundamental principles and directives, both with regard to immediate neighbours and to more distant countries.”

This statement made it clear that each State was to maintain a separate Foreign Office and a separate military command, so that it is difficult to see in how far the proposed confederation was to exceed the bounds of an alliance.

But in this war agreements and declarations age with incredible speed. A case in point is the Atlantic Charter, hailed as the dawn of a new age. Meanwhile it has been discovered that its value is rather declamatory. According to authoritative interpretation it is meant to apply neither to the enemy nor, as has become evident during the Polish-Russian conflict, to Allies. To-day it has become a rather nebulous declaration of pious wishes and good intentions, but without binding force on either those who uttered it or its addressees.

The Czechoslovak-Polish confederation agreement has been similarly affected. Although in principle President Beneš still adheres to the basic idea of this agreement, the course of events made its application impracticable for the time being. It should be remembered that the agreement contains a clause which makes its application dependent on the fulfilment of two conditions. It is expressly stated that, if the agreement is to be rendered effective, the two signatories should establish and maintain friendly relations to Soviet Russia, and that the internal régimes of the two countries should be co-ordinated on the basis of true—political and social—democracy.

It has become obvious to Dr. Beneš, as to all observers not blinded by illusions, that the post-war world will not be a millennium—a

period of brotherly love and international amity in which the small States can be confident of their absolute independence. On the contrary, the small States, if they wish to survive, will have to integrate themselves into one or another of the large blocs whose outline can be discerned even now.

There is an old Russian proverb : " Heaven is high and the Tsar far away." In the case of Czechoslovakia, the equivalent of the Tsar is considerably closer at hand than the Western Allies who once before left Czechoslovakia in the lurch and were equally unable to bring succour to Poland or Rumania. When President Beneš finally succeeded in making the trip to Moscow he brought back a close alliance with Russia that was henceforth to be an essential factor in Czechoslovakia's future. As Polish-Russian relations had gravely deteriorated, confederation in that direction was shelved. Britain has given Russia a free hand in reshaping the frontiers of the future Poland which will, no doubt, be such as are compatible with the safety of Russia and Poland's other neighbours.

President Beneš arrived in Moscow on December 11, 1943, and the Treaty was signed on the following day. During the signature ceremony Dr. Beneš said :

" I wish to express my feelings of deep satisfaction at the fact that to-day we have been able to sign this Agreement which I regard as an act of paramount importance in our national history and in the relationship between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.

" This Agreement has crowned the aspirations of Czechoslovakia which have existed for over twenty years and which aimed at safeguarding our people and State from German imperialism.

" It is a natural stage in the course of the war, directed against the inhuman and plundering German chauvinism which in the present war strove to destroy the neighbouring Slav countries, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. It is a link in the future order which will be beneficial to us and to all our Allies and will help to strengthen peace in Europe.

" Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to thank you and all Soviet political and military workers who have taken part in the realisation of this Treaty.

" It will be, as I said yesterday, a firm guarantee of a better future for Czechoslovakia and her political, military, economic and cultural co-operation with the brotherly peoples of the Soviet Union."

M. Kalinin, President of the Soviet Union, replied in the following words :

" Mr. President, I welcome you in the name of the people of the Soviet Union in our capital, Moscow.

“The Agreement between the U.S.S.R. and the Czechoslovak Republic of amity, mutual aid and post-war co-operation concluded to-day is an important contribution in our common struggle against German Fascism and against any new aggression from Germany.

“The traditional friendship of our peoples which found its expression in the Agreement of mutual aid concluded in Prague on May 16, 1935, and the Agreement between our two Governments on joint action in the war against Germany signed on July 17, 1941, in London has now been cemented by a new Agreement which constitutes the most important historical phase in the development of this friendship.

“The strengthening of fighting co-operation between our peoples and all freedom-loving peoples of the world is a guarantee of success in the cause of the destruction of German Fascism and all its associates in bloody crimes in Europe.

“The hour of reckoning is approaching, for all the humiliation, pain, blood and tears of the Czech people, whose tortures and sufferings are familiar and comprehensible to our people who have themselves experienced the whole weight of Hitler's invasion.

“The Russian people have administered a powerful rebuff to the enemy and are now waging a struggle for the final expulsion of the hated invader from all Soviet territories.

“It should be noted that what is stated in the Agreement is actually being realised—co-operation is being cemented by the blood of the sons of our peoples who are fighting shoulder to shoulder towards common victory, the common victory of the Allied cause.

“The Agreement lays a firm foundation for post-war co-operation of our peoples and for nipping in the bud all attempts by Germany to take up again her old plundering *Drang nach Osten* (Drive to the East) policy.

“Any such aggressive policy by German imperialism must be opposed by the peoples of our countries with all their strength.

“Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you and your collaborators on the conclusion of the Agreement which is to serve the great future of our peoples. I thank you for your efforts, which have been happily crowned by the signature of this Agreement.”

During his stay in Moscow, President Beneš established contact with batches of prisoners of Czechoslovak origin in German, Hungarian or Slovak units. Many of these volunteered for service in the newly established Czechoslovak military forces in Russia.

From Moscow President Beneš broadcast to his countrymen in occupied Czechoslovakia on December 22, explaining the purport of the new Treaty. The Germans in the so-called “Protectorate” had once more raised the Bolshevik bogey and founded an anti-

Bolshevik league which was proclaiming loudly that Beneš had "sold himself and his country to Bolshevism." Dispelling such hostile propaganda, the President said :

"My present journey to Moscow—like my journey to Moscow in 1935—is not for me a question of any momentary and haphazard opportunist gesture of war-time policy that is then to be changed by later events ; this journey is for me the natural consequence, the logical conclusion and the culmination of the development of our policy over a whole century ; it has been made possible only by the Russian Revolution in the last war, by the splendid consolidation of the Soviet State and by its present great military successes in full alliance with Great Britain and the United States. It is a significant step in our *permanent* future international policy, supplementing the European policy of Great Britain and the Soviet Union as expressed in the Anglo-Soviet Pact and confirmed in the latest Conferences in Moscow and in Teheran.

"The new Treaty of Friendship and Collaboration respects our full sovereignty and the fact that each State will refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other ; in this we have both wished to show in the most emphatic manner in the eyes of the whole world and against the stupid and boundlessly false propaganda both of the Germans and of our own treacherous Czech and Slovak quislings—we thus wished to show what was emphasised already at the Moscow Conference of the three Great Powers : that these Great Powers and especially the Soviet Union fully respect the independence of smaller nations and States, that it desires a strong Czechoslovakia, a strong Poland, a strong Yugoslavia, and of course also an independent Austria, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland."

President Beneš foreshadowed changes in Czechoslovak political and economic life, such as a reduction of the number of parties to three. In this connection he stated :

"Our State, which immediately after this war will set up its political régime in entire freedom through an entirely restricted number of political parties—I myself should personally desire there to be only three—will be a democratic State, truly a people's State ; immediately after the fall of Germany it will have its new Government which will also represent our whole national home front—only Fascists, Nazis and all the treacherous culprits of this war will be excluded from it and from its advantages. These must of course disappear in the abyss of their own catastrophe and must atone for all their errors, guilt and crimes and treachery as will be the case in all the other liberated countries of Europe. Our State will also carry out a number of changes in the economic and social sphere : it will accept for its policy and its economic life the system of planning as certain of our economists

endeavoured to do before the present war ; I myself expect, and I shall strive for this, that our whole post-war reconstruction, political, economic and social, and especially in the sphere of nationality, in our new State should be carried out very quickly, at least in accordance with a previously prepared programme of a systematic well thought out and scientifically prepared first Five Year Plan."

While Czechoslovakia is determined wholeheartedly to co-operate with the West, she will at the same time look East. President Beneš brought this out very clearly when he said :

"The Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty, with all that is developing from the present war in the co-operation of the Soviet Union with Western Europe, *will prevent once and for all the possibility of a repetition of Munich*, the possibility of a repetition of the treachery of the Slovak Fascists and of their treasonable separation of Slovakia from the Republic in the service of barbarous German violence, and it will cause to disappear from our midst for ever German Nazism and base, treacherous Henleinism. That is one of the principal tasks and aims of this Treaty—I say this clearly and openly. In other words : what we are doing here is *one of the principal guarantees for the existence of a united, national Czechoslovak State of Czechs, Slovaks, and of the Carpatho-Russian people for the whole of our future that we can survey.*"

With regard to other political problems President Beneš expressly left a door open for Poland, saying :

"I said to you already in August, 1942, that Commissar Molotov had assured me that the Soviet Union had never had anything to do with Munich and would never recognise any of its consequences and that, when signing a Treaty with us on July 18, 1941, concerning military alliance in the present war against Germany, *he had acknowledged and signed it with the pre-Munich Republic.* This still holds good for both our States to-day and it holds good in particular for our present Treaty. The Soviet Union, moreover, sincerely desires a strong, consolidated Czechoslovak Republic, as nationally homogeneous as possible, which should indeed be a good and strong friend and collaborator of the Soviet nations in the future defence of lasting European peace. It harbours the same desires with regard to the future Poland, and it desires not only a good and friendly relationship towards that country *but also full Polish-Czechoslovak friendship and collaboration.* All this also arises from the supplementary Protocol to our Treaty which foresees and desires that this Treaty should in the near future become a Tripartite Treaty between the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia."

The entire scope of the Treaty was explained to the Czechoslovak State Council in London by Dr. Hubert Ripka. He emphasised that

the new Treaty merely continued the policy of alliance dating from 1935. However, the new Treaty was in no way linked up with the League of Nations or the former Franco-Soviet Pact, and the duty of providing mutual assistance is now based entirely on the event of an attack by Germany or her allies.

Dr. Ripka explained the underlying motive of the Treaty, saying :

“ The Treaty expressly declares that the Soviet-Czechoslovak Alliance desires to thwart the German *Drang nach Osten* (Drive to the East). This latter phrase was deliberately used. Thus, the common interest and the common aim of Soviet and Czechoslovak policy are brought clearly into prominence. The nations of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe have, for centuries, been perpetually menaced by Germany's aggressive propensity for encroachment and her greed to dominate and exploit them. Hitler's imperialistic programme was not merely the outcome of Nazi cravings, but in a crudely brutal form expressed the century-old Teutonic urge to enslave the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, especially the Slav nations there. And in the present war Germany capped all her previous efforts during the ages by indulging in a monstrous display of brutality and violence. At the same time, however, it was shown in this war, even more convincingly than in the last one, that the success of the German *Drang nach Osten* would signify the final victory also of her *Drang nach Westen*. This twofold “ drang ” must be broken, and this war has demonstrated that they can be broken, once and for all. The smaller nations of Central Europe who became the victims of German Imperialism have, in particular, shown that even so short a period as twenty years of independence sufficed to strengthen their national consciousness to such an extent that their desire for a free life of their own, which is now being constantly manifested by their unceasing resistance to the German interlopers, could be eradicated only and solely if Germany were to eradicate them to the last man. But over and above this, the new Russia has been revealed to the whole world ; internally regenerated and recreated by the November Revolution and the régime which emerged from it, Russia has astonished the world both by her amazing powers of resistance as well as by her great victorious strength, which are derived from the new creative energies of Soviet patriotism and the self-assurance and self-reliance of her inhabitants as citizens of the Soviet Union.”

Dr. Ripka visualised the new enhanced position of the Soviet Union which would be a paramount military power after the war. He went on to say :

“ Under these entirely new circumstances it is not merely a pious wish, but a definite possibility, that the German *Drang nach Osten* should be broken for ever. This can be achieved if the nations of

Central Europe inaugurate a sincere co-operation with the Soviet Union ; against a stronghold thus constructed any attempt on the part of aggressive German imperialism must prove a disastrous failure.

“ The Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Alliance is a means to this very purpose and, in order that the intentions and the purpose of this policy may be entirely clear to the whole world, the two Governments have expressed their willingness in a special protocol that if any third country which borders on Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union and in this war has been the object of German attack, wishes to adhere to the Treaty it will be given an opportunity, by a joint agreement of the Governments of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, of signing this Treaty, which would thus acquire the character of a tripartite agreement. The two Governments here have in mind the possibility of arranging such a pact with Poland, naturally if this latter country should so desire. Obviously it would be to the advantage of all Europe if a bloc could be created by an alliance between the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Protocol appended to the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty confirms that the two Governments regard the realisation of this project as one of the aims of their policy.”

The Pact, said Dr. Ripka, aimed at strengthening the security of Europe. He denied that it meant the Bolshevisation of Europe or Czechoslovakia. “ The Pact,” he said, “ gives firm answer to all those who continue to suspect the Soviet Union of the intention to Bolshevise the neighbouring Central European countries or even of annexing them, and also to those who continue to portray Czechoslovakia as an instrument in the hands of the Soviets. In this Treaty the Soviet Union once again and in a formal manner pledges itself to respect the independence of Czechoslovakia and not to intervene in its political affairs ; Czechoslovakia makes similar pledges. By these formal commitments it has once more been confirmed that the Soviet Government has no project of forcing its political régime on to other nations, still less of annexing Central European or other nations into the Soviet scheme of things. Incidentally, Stalin, in his speech on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the foundation of the Soviet Union, once more proclaimed that the liberated European nations will be given complete freedom to decide for themselves as to the structure of their own countries. Hence by the pact which Czechoslovakia has concluded with the Soviet Union it has not only not weakened its sovereignty and independence, but has, on the contrary, fundamentally strengthened and secured it. Not in mistrust and unfriendly constraint towards the Soviet Union, but in confidence and sincere willingness for genuinely amicable co-operation with it, it is a reliable guarantee of the ensuring of the freedom and independence of every

country, particularly the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe ; for every nation in this area, upon which the Soviet Union directly borders, may rest assured that, if it fosters friendship with this Great Power, it will certainly receive from it friendly assistance in safeguarding its freedom and independence.

“Thus the policy expressed by the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty justifies the hope that it will lead to beneficial results throughout Central and South-Eastern Europe. Thereby undoubtedly ways are opened up by which the nations in that area, through friendly co-operation with the neighbouring Soviet Great Power, may secure themselves permanently against pan-German aggression and desire of domination which threatened not only their freedom, but, as this war has shown, their very existence. Thereby, too, it will be made possible for those nations, in common action with the Soviet Union as well as with the Great Western Powers, to establish their freedom and find a firm basis for their co-operation with other nations.”

Dr. Ripka then outlined eight conditions which are indispensable for the closer co-operation among the smaller nations. These fundamental conditions were :

“(1) First and foremost it must be based upon the freedom and independence of all these nations—any repression or limitation of this independence must be emphatically repudiated, especially if it were to proceed from some outside source such as a stronger Power or association of Powers.

“(2) It can only be the result of voluntary and spontaneous decision on the part of each individual nation—pressure from outside would merely result in violent opposition which would spoil the chances of any co-operation at all.

“(3) Co-operation with the Soviet Union which borders upon this region and which in the East of Europe constitutes the strongest Power, capable of thwarting German imperialism, is in the interest of the security of these countries.

“(4) It is likewise necessary that each of them should seek friendly co-operation with the Western Powers.

“(5) Close co-operation between the smaller nations of Central and South-Eastern Europe must not tend to any exclusiveness which might even drift into a shut-in-autarkic policy—on the contrary, intensive political and economic relations with other countries must be fostered ; from this it follows that close co-operation between them is thinkable only within a general European and world-wide scope.

“(6) It is possible to achieve the economic and technical modernisation of the majority of these smaller nations and to raise their social and cultural level, only in general co-operation with other nations and, above all, with the Soviet Union, as well as with the Western Powers.

“(7) These nations will be able to decide individually as to the forms, extent, character and range of such co-operation only when they have been liberated after the present war and are able to readjust their internal conditions which have been entirely thrown into confusion by the German rule of violence, and when those nations which in the present war sided with Germany have made good all the acts of violence which they perpetrated against the nations which fought on the side of the Allies, and provide unmistakable proofs of their genuine willingness for peaceful co-operation with them.

“(8) It is necessary that the internal régimes of the nations desiring close co-operation with each other should be based upon common principles of genuine democracy.

“Such are the chief and entirely essential conditions for a close co-operation between the smaller Central European nations. We have always openly advocated these principles, being aware that this co-operation could be put into practice only in combination with a general co-operation of all the nations of Europe, including, of course, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, which two Great Powers, even though they possess—incidentally in the same way as France—their special interests also in other parts of the world, belong organically to the European community of nations.”

After mentioning the necessity for an independent Austria with which Prague wished to co-operate, Dr. Ripka asserted that Czechoslovakia would emerge from the war as a really strong State, bound by bonds of alliance and friendship not only to the Soviet Union but also to Great Britain, the United States and China. Dr. Ripka concluded with these words:

“If we bear in mind all these facts, if we consider that already now, before the end of the war, we have achieved the conclusion of a bond of alliances with the Soviet Great Power, and that at the same time we have deepened and established on new, firm foundations, our friendly relations with the Western Great Powers, we are entitled to feel sure that the international position of Czechoslovakia after this war will be much stronger, more secure and more influential than it was before this war.”

The Soviet-Czechoslovak Pact demonstrates more than anything else the failure of the Atlantic Charter to make an effective contribution to the settlement of post-war questions. Dr. Beneš has been attacked for anticipating European reorganisation after the war through this bilateral pact. But the pact expressly provides for the adherence of others, even Poland, and these objections have been dealt with in Dr. Ripka's speech. Henceforward Russian power—possibly military bases but almost certainly aerodromes—will be within a very few miles of Germany's industrial centres, and half-an-hour's flying

time from Berlin. Czechoslovakia and other Slav nations under the mighty protection of Russia will then be safe from German aggression.

This arrangement which guarantees Czechoslovakia's security will, of course, have certain political consequences. Her future Government will probably be constituted in such a way as to give the Left Wing a greater share of responsibility and power. As regards the influence Soviet Russia is likely to exercise in Central Europe, much will depend on British and American policy.

Numerous domestic problems will demand a solution ; the problem of minorities is among the most important. Dr. Ripka, voicing what is no doubt the considered policy of Dr. Beneš and his Administration, hints at "an endeavour to reconstruct the smaller Central European countries in such a way as to make them as nationally homogeneous as possible and to reduce to a minimum the prominence of the minority element in them." To this end the Czechoslovak Government envisages a transfer of populations so that Germany can no longer misuse her minorities for her Pan-German aims. This question is complicated by the existence of small groups of loyal Sudeten Germans, chiefly Socialists and Communists, who have repeatedly protested their love for the Czechoslovak Republic, and whom it would certainly be unjust to deport to Germany. It is altogether doubtful whether the creation of nationally homogeneous States is possible, and whether population transfers do more good or more harm. It will take the collective wisdom of the makers of the coming peace to decide whether the hardships and inevitable *ressentiments* bound to arise from forcible population transfers are outweighed by the political advantages accruing therefrom.

Czechoslovakia will also face a number of economic and organisational problems, including that of industrial and agricultural reconstruction. The whole of this great work is to be done in a spirit of Democracy and advanced social policy ; indeed, Dr. Beneš stated in 1941 that "in the social realm the guiding principle must be also the necessary degree of individual freedom." It remains to be seen, of course, in how far the inevitable alignment with Russian methods will allow Czechoslovakia to preserve this individual freedom for her citizens.

* * *

Thus far history in the making, as we are witnessing it. Prognostications are uncertain : the political scene shifts with kaleidoscopic rapidity ; words and political terms are changing their content overnight. Even political fronts promise little permanence. Where, then, is the fixed pole amid this quickly shifting scene ?

There is only one answer. We have to revert to certain fundamentals which, however trite they may seem, have to be re-stated. Democracy has become a coat of many colours. The great leaders of the United Nations represent varying kinds and aspects of Democracy. Winston Churchill, descendant and last representative of that spirit of the eighteenth century England which achieves Democracy by basing an aristocratic outlook on the traditional "humanities"; Franklin D. Roosevelt, leading a Democracy geared to the wheels of a highly developed capitalistic society; Chiang Kai-shek, the Napoleon of the Chinese Revolution, who may open the doors of Democracy to the as yet inarticulate masses of China. And among them Eduard Beneš, representative of the "little man"—not only of Czechoslovakia but of all the small people in Europe who long for peace, tranquillity and security from a nightmare which has lasted a generation. Eduard Beneš, youthful revolutionary, leader of a civilised and well-ordered community, whom cruelty and stupidity have exiled at an age when he could expect to reap the fruits of a life of patriotic devotion to his nation and to Europe.

Eduard Beneš, like the "common man" he represents and defends, is unspectacular. But he is tenacious, and he will succeed. For he, like all those on whom has rested the shadow of the great Masaryk, feel that they are fighting for Truth, and that Truth is fighting for them.

PRÁVDA VITEŽÍ—TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL.

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